

- 596 In the first place the Coorg individual is a member of a domestic
794 group, the *okka* or patrilineal joint-family. His closest social ties are with this group and its members, and the well-being of this group is something that is for him of supreme importance. Each such group has its own religious cult. There are daily religious observances of the members of the joint family. There are recurrent occasions on which ritual performances are called for. Any event which affects the solidarity or well-being of the group is an occasion of ritual, such as in births, deaths, and marriages. Piety, for a Coorg, is in the first place the observance of the requirements of this domestic cult.

114 Dr. Srinivas has described for us the various features of this
794 domestic cult, but he has done more than that. He has helped us to
182 see the social function of these rituals as expressing and maintaining the solidarity and continuity of the structural system. Further, he has sought, with some considerable measure of success, to reveal the meaning of the ritual idiom of the Coorg domestic cult. In any system of ritual each ritual action has its meaning, and the totality of such meanings constitutes the idiom of that system. Just as different societies have different languages so also they have their systems of ritual idiom, and it is the task of the social anthropologist to investigate a system of ritual idiom in the same way that he studies a language. To understand the way a people talk it is necessary to know the idiom of their language; to understand a religion it is necessary to have some understanding of the ritual idiom in which they express their religious sentiments. We do not understand the Coorg domestic cult unless we understand the religious meaning to the Coorgs of the lamp hanging in the hall of the house; and other features of their rites and ceremonies.

- 621 Besides being a member of a joint family (*okka*) the Coorg individual
794 is a member of a village community which includes not only persons of his own caste but also members of other castes. The village community has its own religious cult, with its god or gods and its temple or shrine or temples. The village-deities, when properly propitiated, protect the village and its inhabitants from smallpox and plague and other supernatural evils, and afford blessings such as good health and abundant crops. Thus the cult of the village-deities is a collective action of the community. Just as the domestic cult has for its ostensible aim the preservation of the well-being of the particular group, so the village cult has for its

villagers on a ritual occasion. If the institution of caste has a tendency to lay stress on 'horizontal unity', the harvest festival tends to counterpoise it by stressing the unity of the village.

VI

The nuclear unit of Coorg society is the *okka* or patrilineal joint family, and only the male members of an *okka* have any rights in the ancestral estate. Women born in the *okka* leave it on marriage, while the women who come into it by marriage have extremely limited rights in the ancestral estate. No woman may be head of an *okka*. A Coorg proverb says, 'a woman may not be the head of an *okka*, and a bitch may not be given a share of the game it helps to kill in a hunt'.¹

Only sons can continue the *okka*. But when there are no sons, a daughter, or widow of a dead son is married in either the *okka parié* or *makka parié* way (see pp. 129-30), which has the effect of granting the children of either form of union membership of their mother's natal *okka*. If it is not possible to perpetuate the *okka* in either of these ways, a boy from another *okka* is adopted.

There is a sexual division of labour, men generally doing the work outside the house while women do the work inside. The tasks done by men are in a vague way regarded as superior to those done by women. The men cultivate or supervise the cultivation of land by low-caste labourers. However, agriculture is not, and has never been, their sole occupation. The army has always attracted Coorgs, and nowadays educated Coorgs are to be found in every profession.

Village-assemblies and *nād*-assemblies were formerly vigorous institutions and only men normally took part in them. The men went in annual caravans to Malabar, in the dry season, to sell their surplus rice and buy salt, jaggery, coconut, coconut oil, tobacco, and fish. They also had the privilege and duty of conducting the elaborate festivals of village-deities and calendar festivals such as the harvest festival.

Coorg women's activities are on the whole confined to the house. They cook food for the twenty or thirty members of the *okka*. They look after the children and servants, the storing of food, the raising of pig and fowl, and so on. The younger women have to bring

¹ Even today at a collective hunt bitches are not entitled to any share in the meat of the hunted animal, while each of the dogs is given a share.

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592 water from the domestic pond or well and carry manure in reed baskets to the fields.

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[521] The sexes are generally segregated. The outer veranda serves as a club for the men, and they sit down on the benches there, drinking, chewing betel, and talking. The women rarely visit the veranda.¹ Similarly, men rarely join the women who are all presumably sitting in the kitchen, or in one of the inner rooms.

[264] Men and women dine separately, the women dining after the men.

[574] When relatives visit a Coorg house, the men guests join the men hosts in the veranda, whereas the women guests join the women hosts in an inner part of the house. During the harvest

[533] festival and festival of the village-deities the men sing and dance while the women watch them from a distance. Usually the men

[791] play a more active part in the festivals than the women. There is an oracle in the festival of every village-deity, and the oracles are usually men. Women oracles are indeed rare, but where they function they are important.

562 Women are expected to observe a stricter code of conduct than
684 men. For instance, formerly, a Coorg woman who had committed adultery with a low-caste man was summarily thrown out of caste, whereas a lapse on the part of a man was not treated with equal seriousness. Again, there was some difference in the punishment meted out to a man and woman: a man was liable to be fined or excommunicated, whereas excommunication was the only punishment for a woman.

182 Different ideals are held up for men and women. Strength, skill
562 in fighting and hunting, and courage are admired in a man. A proverb states, 'men should die on the battlefield, and women should die in child-bed'. The killer of a tiger or panther and mother of ten children were both accorded the honour of a *mangala* ceremony. (See Chapter III.)

562 Formerly women seem to have enjoyed greater freedom than they do nowadays. Elderly informants remember that even as recently as fifty years ago women used to sing and beat cymbals in public on festive occasions. Coorg folksongs tell us of women who killed tigers and held assemblies of men to ridicule. In some folk-

[342] ¹ Frequently a Coorg house has a separate entrance which enables the women to move in and out of the house without being seen by the men who are gathered in the veranda.

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888 instance of Kaiyandira Appayya who saved the honour of his *nāḍ* 557 and its temple by defeating and killing the fighter Kullachenda Chondu. A grateful *nāḍ* decreed that none, not even elders to Appayya, may address him by name. He was not permitted to salute an elder by touching the latter's feet. He was also prohibited from doing a number of things which ordinary Coorgs did, as, for instance, wearing the black Coorg gown (only the white gown is sacred), ploughing, and eating bamboo-shoots.

796 At the harvest festival the astrologer may choose a young boy to 889 perform the rite of cutting the sheaves. Such a boy is put into a position of ritual respect till the festival is over. He wears a white gown and he may not be touched till he has brought the severed sheaves home. Further, he is not permitted to salute an elder till the ritual is over. In other words the accordance of extreme respect to him necessitates the endowment of seniority for the duration of the ritual.

VIII

- 596 The Coorg *okka* seems to be stronger and more sharply struc- 1047 tured than the joint family elsewhere in south India, with the possible exception of the matrilineal *tarwāḍ* of the Nāyars, and the patrilineal *illam* of the Nambūdris. Every *okka* has an ancestral house (*ain mané*) built on the ancestral estate. Formerly, most of the members of the *okka* lived in the ancestral house, but nowadays only one or two segments inhabit it, while the rest are scattered all over Coorg and, occasionally, all over India. All the members of the *okka* gather together only on certain occasions, such as the marriage or death of a member, the harvest festival, the festival of the local village-deity, and the periodical ancestor-propitiation.

596 The ancestral house and estate are accorded respect, and it is 769 usual to have ancestor-shrines (*kaimaḍa*) or ancestor-platforms 778 (*kāraṇava taré*) near the ancestral house. Coorgs, even those who are living away from the ancestral house, have some attachment towards it, and this expresses itself in having marriages and ancestor-propitiations performed there in preference to anywhere else.

769 Also, a Coorg prefers to be buried after death in his ancestral burial-ground which is a corner of the ancestral estate used for disposal of the dead members of the *okka*.

342 The ancestral house is usually a substantial building of stone and 596

312 mortar, with solid, carved woodwork. Masons and carpenters
 596 from Malabar build them, and Coorg ancestral houses consequently resemble greatly the houses of well-to-do Nāyars. The house is usually situated on an elevation, and a narrow, high-walled and winding lane (*ōṇi*) leads up to it. From the windows in the upper story one usually obtains a fine view of the surrounding
 [628] country. Formerly, in the days when feuds, or *kuḍupi* (*kuḍippaka* in Malayālam), between joint families were common, and a surprise raid (*haḷḷa paḍé*) from a hostile *okka* was always a possibility, anyone coming with unfriendly intentions exposed himself to view from the windows of the ancestral house. The house was built like a fortress and was able to stand a siege for several days.

596 The ancestral estate usually includes an extent of jungle, some
 423 grazing land, and valleys in which rice is grown. The jungle
 [33] provided the household with the necessary timber and fuel. A
 [247] part of the jungle is reserved for burying or cremating the dead members of the *okka*. There is a kitchen-garden near the main building. A well or pond provides water for domestic purposes.

[351] Every house includes an ancestor-shrine or ancestor-platform.
 [178] Uncarved stones, representing cobra-deities, are planted on platforms built around the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. There may also be other uncarved stones representing minor deities like Pūda and Guḷika.

596 According to Lewis Rice,¹ in the seventies of the last century the Coorg *okka* frequently consisted of twenty or thirty, and occasionally even fifty members, all residing under one roof. He further tells us that previous to the invasion of Coorg by Tippu Sultan in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon to find in a house thirty or forty adult male relatives living together. Many *okkas* seem to have had 120 to 150 people, all living in the ancestral house.

Nowadays the *okka* commonly consists of two or three generations of agnatically-related males, their wives, and their children.
 [591] Girls born in the *okka* go out on marriage as residence is patrilocal, but it sometimes happens that a woman remains unmarried for a variety of reasons. In such a case she stays in her natal *okka*. An
 596 *okka* also includes the widow of a deceased member. As mentioned
 587 earlier, leviratic unions are preferred amongst Coorgs, and a widow

¹ *Mysore and Coorg*, Bangalore, 1878, vol. iii, p. 329.

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of marriageable age marries a younger brother of her dead husband. Even if she does not do so, she stays in her husband's *okka* looking after the children. She goes out of her conjugal *okka* only if she marries a member of a different *okka*.

All the members of an *okka* are descended from a common ancestor. The spirits of the dead ancestors (*kāraṇavas*) are regarded with great reverence and propitiated periodically. It is believed that they continue to take an interest in the affairs of the *okka*. They expect the surviving members to look after the property and interests of the *okka*, to observe the rules of the moral code, and to show piety towards the various deities and themselves. They have the power to reward those who are pious and to punish with disease and misfortune those who are impious.

The eldest male member of the most senior agnatic branch is the head (*koruvukāra* or *paṭṭēdāra*) of the *okka* whose properties he looks after and whose affairs he administers. The younger male members are called *kikkararu* and they have to obey the head in all matters concerning the *okka* as a whole. The head of the *okka* is usually also the eldest male member of it, and this union of headship and seniority in the same person results in his enjoying a great amount of power in domestic matters. Personal qualities such as hard work, sobriety, chastity, piety towards manes and gods, unselfishness and impartiality increase the headman's powers.

The headman's powers are balanced by his duties: he has to see that the expenses of the household are met, the members of the *okka* do not quarrel with each other, the ancestral lands are properly cultivated, and so on. He has always to weigh in his own mind how every act of his is regarded by the adult men in the *okka*. It is not known whether formerly every *okka* had a council composed of the adult men in it, but it is known definitely that when a headman proved himself very incompetent all the adult men in the *okka* met together and proceeded to elect a new headman. In the last seventy years the Karavanda *okka* twice elected new headmen to replace the existing ones. The right to replace an old but incompetent headman with a young and competent man is sanctioned by the Coorg saw (*paṭanjol* = old saying), '*ariyuvavanē periyavan*', which means 'the wisest is the eldest'. We call attention here to the equation of wisdom with seniority, an equation which is used even in replacing an old man by a young one.

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423 Until the beginning of the last century the immovable property of an *okka* was regarded as impartible, and property descended from one generation to another without being split up in the process. In this respect Coorgs differed from other Hindus and, consequently, Coorg agriculture escaped the two great drawbacks of agriculture elsewhere in India, the subdivision of land into minute holdings and fragmentation or scattering of holdings over a wide area.

All earlier writers on Coorg—Connor, Moegling, Cole, and Rice¹—are unanimous in holding that the immovable property of a Coorg *okka* is traditionally impartible. But some time after the defeat of Tippu in the closing years of the eighteenth century, some Coorg *okkas* were permitted by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas,² used to the Hindu idea of partition, to divide off. The example of these Coorgs was followed by many others. Consequently, 'in 1858 the *takkas* [social heads] and headmen of the Coorgs represented that the loss and ruin occasioned to their ancient houses by this innovation [was very great], and the Judicial Commissioner in additional Special Appeal Suit No. 117 of 1858-9 passed a decree declaring that division was contrary to the ancient custom of Coorg'.³ The fact that the ancestral property was impartible was responsible to a great extent for preventing the *okka* from splitting.

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179 The British also encouraged, although indirectly, the idea of partition of the ancestral property. They granted, for instance, *jagirs* or assessment-free lands to Coorgs who had taken part in the suppression of the Canara Rebellion of 1837. These *jagirs* were granted to individuals and not to the *okkas* of which they were members.

Coorgs who were government officials under the British bought farms and coffee- and orange-gardens with their savings, and the law courts established by the British permitted these to be regarded as the property of the individual acquirer and not of the *okka* of

¹ Connor, *Memoirs of the Codagu Survey*, pt. ii, Bangalore, 1870, pp. 29-30; H. Moegling, *Coorg Memoirs*, 1855, p. 30; R. A. Cole, *Manual of Coorg Law*, secs. 115-17; L. Rice, *Mysore and Coorg*, vol. iii, p. 329.

² Rice tells us that the Lingāyaṭ Rājas encouraged the idea of partition in order to break up the huge joint families of Coorgs. The Rājas wanted to increase the area under cultivation and also, according to Rice, they disliked intensely the fraternal polyandry of Coorgs. Rice remarks, 'Coorgs still viewed any deviation from this ancient custom [of polyandry] with the greatest abhorrence.' *Op. cit.*, p. 329.

³ Cole, *op. cit.*, secs. 160, 165, 182.

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which he was a member.¹ In addition to this, recent changes in Hindu law, which apply to Coorgs also, have been such as to encourage individual acquisition at the expense of the *okka*. 596 ●
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The ancient custom of Coorgs recognized individual property only to a very limited extent, and that too only in movables. For instance, the younger members of an *okka* could cultivate, in the non-paddy season, and after they had contributed their daily quota of work to the joint estate, crops like ginger and turmeric. When these were sold a share was given to the *okka* for having provided the land on which they were grown. [421]

The encouragement given to the ideas of partition and individual acquisition, the uprooting of Coorgs from their ancestral estates owing to the new political and economic structure stretching all over India, and the growing appeal of individualist ideas to the people, are all adversely affecting the solidarity of the *okka*. The elementary family, which was a weak entity in the traditional structure, is emerging with greater distinctness nowadays. [594]

IX

In a sense, only men are full members of the *okka*, but such rights as women do possess in it are of paramount importance to them, and the granting of these rights in the bridegroom's *okka* is the crucial point in the marriage ritual. The granting of rights to the bride in the groom's *okka* is accompanied by the severance of her connexion with her natal *okka*. But such severance is not complete and irrevocable. The entire process is symbolized in the transference of twelve pebbles from the bride's natal *okka* to her conjugal *okka*. 596
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After marriage, then, a girl is a member of her conjugal *okka*, and her membership does not become extinct even if she becomes a widow. She is entitled to stay in her conjugal home and to be maintained out of its income. She has also the right to be buried after death in its burial-ground. 596
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The bride is given membership in the groom's *okka*, and not rights in the groom's share in the ancestral property of his *okka*. The entire idea of an individual having a share in the ancestral property of his *okka* is a comparatively recent introduction into Coorg law. Traditionally, the immovable property of an *okka*

¹ G. Richter, *Manual of Coorg*, p. 130.

596 was both inalienable and impartible. But when partition did actually take place, it was done with the consent of all the members.

Nowadays, occasionally, a Coorg widow who is marrying her dead husband's younger brother is given rights anew in the *okka* of her new husband. This novel custom proceeds from the idea referred to above, that the bride is only given rights in her husband's share of his *okka's* property. It indicates, however, the growing importance of the elementary family among Coorgs.

[587] When, however, the widow wants to marry someone who is not a member of her dead husband's *okka*, her connexion with the latter is first of all ritually broken. She then reverts to her natal *okka*, and at her new marriage her connexion with her natal *okka* is ritually severed, and rights are granted to her in her (new) husband's *okka*.

That is to say, a woman is compensated for the lack of the same quality of rights which a man has in his natal *okka* by the fact that she always enjoys a double membership: she never completely ceases to be a member of her natal *okka*, and at the same time she is a member of her husband's *okka*. She can go back to it under certain circumstances like widowhood or divorce.

Membership of the *okka* is extremely important, and lack of membership in some *okka* or other is tantamount to social extinction. Elders consequently try hard to see that the children of extra-marital alliances get berthed somewhere. It is right and proper that the father of the children should secure them membership of his *okka*, but if for some reason or other he cannot be persuaded to do so, the children are made members of their mother's *okka*.

X

596 The wife of the headman of the *okka* is the mistress of the household. She is called '*manépanikārti*' (house-work-woman). Ideally, all the women in the *okka* have to work under her guidance. The relationship between the various women in the joint family is frequently one of conflict. There is first of all the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, which is celebrated in Coorg and other South Indian folklore as one of conflict. In a society where the sexes are segregated even inside the household and where elders are very highly respected, the mother-in-law,

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at least in the first few years of marriage, is a much more important relative for a girl than even her husband. And this relationship is basically one of conflict. A girl is also in a relation of conflict with her husband's sisters, married as well as unmarried, and with her husband's brother's wives. 596 ● 606

The conflicts between the women in the patrilocal *okka* strike at its solidarity. Elsewhere in south India where partition is easy, they lead to division of the joint family. But in Coorg where the *okka* is a very strong entity, and where partition is legally forbidden, they make the harmonious working of the *okka* extremely difficult. 596 602

Besides the conflicts mentioned above, certain lines of cleavage in the *okka* are obvious. The distinction between the sexes, which is present in the whole of the society, is also present in every unit of it. So is the distinction between members of different generations. Enormous emphasis is laid on seniority, and this is visible not only between members of different generations, but also between members of the same generation. The younger member has to behave deferentially towards the older.

Before the introduction, in however grudging a form, of the principle of partition, and of the new ideals associated with industrialization and Westernization, the elementary family was not a powerful unit. It obtained only a grudging recognition in ritual, which was quite consistent with its relative lack of emphasis in the total structure. A tendency of recent times is the strengthening of the elementary family at the expense of the *okka*. The elementary family is increasingly becoming the real residential, commensal, and economic group with certain ties with the *okka* from which it is emerging, or has just emerged. 594 178 596

The existence of these divisions inside the *okka* did not prevent it from acting as a unit in relation to other *okkas*. The *okka* was the basic unit of society, and certain offices like the headmanship of the village, *nād*, and the local temple traditionally ran in certain *okkas*. Again, contribution to collective tasks was on the basis of the *okka*. For instance, each local high caste *okka* had to send at least one man and one woman for every Coorg wedding in the village. Similarly, it had to send representatives to the festival of the village-deity, and for repairing roads and building bridges. All the adult men in an *okka* were required to attend a collective dance or hunt. 596 622 476

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672 Individual responsibility was not entirely ignored, however. An old usage lays down the maximum fine that could be levied on a guilty man¹ (as distinct from the *okka* of which he was a member) as nine annas and three *bhattis* of paddy. Again, when a person was guilty of a grave offence even his *okka* joined with his caste in excommunicating him.

XI

- 621 The institution of family friendship (*aruwāme*) was formerly far
572 more important among Coorgs than it is today. In a Coorg village
594 houses are scattered over a wide area, and a Coorg's nearest Coorg
or other high-caste neighbour is usually several hundred yards
away on the other side of a hill or valley. Formerly, the jungle was
heavier and there were no good roads, and these increased the
(628] difficulties of communication between neighbours. Besides, feuds
were common, and hostile raids from unfriendly villages or *nāds*
were always a possibility. A Coorg sometimes had to get up in the
middle of the night to fight for his life.

Under the circumstances it is easy to see the need for socially stressing the tie of neighbourhood. Two *okkas* usually, though not always, stood in the relation of family friendship to each other, and were frequently related by marriage. The tie of family friendship was a traditional one, so that two *okkas* found that they had inherited this relationship. In the marriage rites, the *aruwa*, or head of the friendly *okka*, is asked whether he is the traditional *aruwa* or the *aruwa* hired with gold for the occasion. The traditional family friend, it is hardly necessary to add, commanded much more respect than the family friend 'hired' for the occasion.

The relationship of family friendship was between two *okkas* and not between two individuals. The headman of the *okka* and his wife were certainly more important than the other members in this relationship, but this was in virtue of the positions they occupied in the *okka*.

At a wedding or death in an *okka* the members of the 'friendly' *okka* had certain duties, duties which are even now performed. The headman of the 'friendly' *okka* is the master of ceremonies on ritual occasions. The younger members of his *okka* and womenfolk

¹ It is likely that the fine was paid out of the private funds of the guilty man, and that where he had none, his *okka* came to his rescue.

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are also required to render help. For instance, at a funeral the 62/ womenfolk of the 'friendly' *okka* were required to cook and serve 572 food to the mourners. 596

XII

No reference has been made so far to territorial groups in Coorg 63/ except for mentioning, in Section V, an instance of the co-operation 62/ that prevails between the various castes living in a village or *nāḍ* during the harvest festival. The village is the smallest and most important of the territorial groups, and the *nāḍ*, consisting of several villages is the next bigger group. Traditionally Coorg was divided into thirty-five *nāḍ*s and twelve *kombu*. A *kombu* literally means 'horn' or 'branch', and in the administrative context it means the area covered by the sound of a brass horn. It is not known what purpose was served by this unit. The twelve *kombu* together formed the kingdom of Coorg ruled by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas.

It has already been mentioned that a village in Coorg Proper is 62/ not as physically compact as a village in the eastern plains. But this does not make it any the less real. The village acts as a unit on certain occasions and its unity obtains ritual expression. The people of a village have a great attachment for it. Besides, every village 623/ has a council of elders, and the council is presided over by the *ūr takka* or village headman, whose office is hereditary. The headmanship (or any other traditional office) is always conceived of as belonging to a certain *okka* and not to an individual.

Like the village, the *nāḍ* is a unit which corresponds to the 634/ sentiments of the people, and is not merely an administrative division imposed by the Rājas. The number of villages in a *nāḍ* varies from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ*: there are 11 villages in Bēngunāḍ, 5 in Ballatnāḍ, 16 in Kaḍiyetnāḍ, 10 in Eḍēnālknāḍ, and 9 in Mūrñāḍ. These are ancient *nāḍ*s, but the boundary of a *nāḍ* has frequently been changed in the past. It was changed, for instance, when the entire administration of the country was reorganized by either Muddu Rāja (1638-86) or his son Doḍḍa Virappa (Vira Rāja II, 1687-1736). The number of *nāḍ*s remained 35 as before, but their boundaries were changed. Subsequently, under the British, the number of *nāḍ*s were reduced successively to 28, 24, 19, and 11.

The headman of a *nāḍ* is called *nāḍ takka*, and while every

63A While groups wider than the *nāḍ* are shadowy, the same cannot be said of the *stṁé*-headmen, who are higher than *nāḍ*-headmen. There are eight *stṁé*-headmen in Coorg Proper, and they are usually mentioned in pairs. Each pair of *stṁé*-headmen comes from the same *nāḍ*: Kaḷḷangala and Boḷḷera from Tāvaḷagērimūrnāḍ, Mātāṇḍa and Buḍuvaṇḍa from Beppunāḍ, Pāṇḍira and Paradāṇḍa from Nālknāḍ, and finally, Pōreyāṇḍa and Paruvaṇḍa from Tāvunāḍ.

596 Feuds between *okkas* seem to have continued well into the latter half of the last century. In 1870 Ritcher wrote: 'It may still happen, 628 that the head of a Coorg house on his dying bed will solemnly 634 charge his sons to seek vengeance on his personal enemies, a bequest which occasions calamitous feuds between succeeding generations.'¹ A feud between *okkas* was called *kudupi*, while a feud between villages or between *nāḍs* was called *maradalé*. It is likely that feuds between *okkas* in the same village were extremely rare as the village was too compact a unit to permit of feuds within it. But the same cannot be said of villages within the same *nāḍ*. The annual dance, at the harvest festival, for all the villages of Ballatnāḍ, is nowadays attended only by Pērūr, and this is attributed to the former prevalence of feuds between the various villages composing this *nāḍ*.

628 Formerly feuds between *nāḍs* were very common, and folklore 634 bears ample testimony to this fact. There was a long feud between 539 Bēngunāḍ and Ballatnāḍ in the course of which they conducted raids on each other. A hero called Appaṇṇa, who later came to be famous as Kappaṇṇa or 'robber', was born in Ballatnāḍ, and when he was born all the people of Bēngunāḍ suffered from headache. Later he raided the Povvedi temple in Bēngūr, and robbed it of the two wooden pins (*ktlu*) with which the temple's see-saw (*rāḷé*) was fixed to two wooden posts. Pilgrims used to sit on the see-saw at the periodical festival of Povvedi of Bēngūr.

The robbing of the wooden pins belonging to the Bēngūr Povvedi temple was a triumph for Balmāṇṇi. The latter had a see-saw made and used it at the biennial festival of the Povvedi of Balmāṇṇi. At the beginning of the festival of Povvedi of Balmāṇṇi there is a rite at which a festival-priest enumerates the restrictions which have to be observed during the festival period, and one of these restrictions states that no one from Bēngūr may approach

¹ *Manual of Coorg*, p. 126.

THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

89

A Coorg never says that a lamp has gone out. He says instead, 784
'the lamp is brighter' (*boḷicha dumb pōchi*). This kind of euphemism 354
is employed on other occasions also: the Kodagi word for a tiger is
'nari' which means a jackal in every other Dravidian language.

Again, no Coorg says that 'a cobra has bitten So-and-so'. He
says instead, 'a creeper has bitten So-and-so'. Finally, after nightfall
no one mentions the barber. If they have to refer to him they say
instead, 'the scraper of heads'. Amongst the Hindus in Mysore the
barber is referred to after nightfall as 'one whose name may not be
mentioned'. A barber is inauspicious, and contact with him is [305]
defiling. He is also associated with inauspicious occasions such as
death, as mourners have to be shaved. Women specially dread the
barber, as until recently among the highest castes widows were
required to have their heads shaved entirely.

In every one of the cases we have mentioned circumlocution is
employed to avoid reference to an unpleasant object or event. The
bite of a snake is always unpleasant and frequently fatal; a barber
suggests death and widowhood; and it is much better to think of a
tiger as a jackal. The euphemistic reference to the extinction of a [596] ●
lamp has a similar purpose: a lamp is the symbol of the solidarity
and strength of the *okka*, and its sudden extinction refers to the
decay and extinction of the *okka*. It also refers to the withdrawal of [782]
the protective power of the ancestors and the deities who are
invoked while saluting a lamp.

Among the Hindus of the eastern plains it is obligatory to light a 788
lamp in the house as soon as it is dark. A house without a lamp 354
suggests that everyone is dead in the house, or that they are too
poor to light one.

The ritual attitude prevalent towards the domestic lamp is easily [71]
extended to fire generally, and to the sun. These again provide [82]
points of contact with Sanskrit or All-India Hinduism.

The kitchen stove is a convenient focus for the general ritual 872
attitude existing towards fire. The kitchen stove, like the domestic 596
lamp, stands for the unity, strength, and protective power of the
okka and this fact finds ritual expression. When a member of the [764]
okka is dead and it is decided to cremate his body, the funeral pyre
is fired with a torch lighted from embers from the kitchen stove.
The torch is made with twigs collected from the domestic burial-
ground.

The belief in the protective power of *teḷi nṛ* is again the result of 372
783

372 a ritual attitude towards the kitchen stove. A few embers from the
 783 kitchen stove and a few grains of cooked rice from a vessel on the
 stove are put into a dining-dish. Water is poured on the embers and
 rice, and a thick, ashy liquid is formed in the dining-dish. This
 liquid is *tefi ntr*, and great protective powers are attributed to it. The
 mourners returning home on the eleventh day after performing the
 rites in the burial-ground, a daughter-in-law returning to her
 conjugal home with her baby born in her natal home, a member of
 the house returning from a long journey, and a newly bought calf
 are all sprinkled with it.

783 In the foregoing instances *tefi ntr* removes some inimical or
 778 dangerous power in the person or object that is coming into the
 house. People who are 'strangers' to the *okka* have this power in
 [609] them. A child of a male member of the *okka* born in its mother's
 372 natal house, a newly bought calf, a member long absent from home,
 596 and a mourner are all 'strangers' for purposes of *tefi ntr*. Mem-
 bers of the *okka* enjoy its protection and strength while persons
 and objects outside it do not do so. Things that stand for the *okka*
 represent its strength and protective power, and the kitchen stove
 is an appropriate object to stand for the *okka*. The embers and
 the cooked rice are both taken from the kitchen stove. The kitchen
 stove and the dining-dish also stand for commensality which is a
 basic feature of the *okka* in every part of India. In fact, commensality
 is a legal criterion of 'jointness'. Commensality denotes the
 unity and strength of the *okka*. Commensality is an act of solidarity.
 Absence of commensality indicates division. In a country like
 India where all kinds of ritual rules surround eating, commensality
 assumes even greater importance than what it would have in
 another society.

372 The domestic lamp, as long as it is burning, indicates that the
 776 protective power of the *okka* is active, and its going out indicates
 171 the withdrawal of such protective power. Such withdrawal spells
 dangers to the members of the *okka*. The domestic lamp led to a
 consideration of the significance of the kitchen stove, and this in
 turn led to a consideration of fire generally and the sun. In
 Sanskrit or All-India Hinduism, Agni is the god of fire and he
 is related to Sāvitār or Sūrya, the sun-god. Agni and Sūrya are
 deities in the Vēdas and they are known and understood all over
 Hindu India. The local phenomenon of the attribution of sacred-
 ness to the domestic lamp and kitchen stove is absorbed into the

V

THE CULT OF THE OKKA

I

THE *okka* or the patrilineal and patrilocal joint family is the ⁵⁹⁶ basic group among Coorgs. It is impossible to imagine a Coorg apart from the *okka* of which he is a member. It affects his life at every point and colours all his relations with the outside world. People who do not belong to an *okka* have no social existence at all, and the elders always bring pressure on the parties concerned to see that children born out of wedlock obtain membership in their father's or mother's *okka*.

Membership of an *okka* is acquired by birth, and the outside ^[769] world always identifies a man with his *okka*. His association with his *okka* does not cease even after death, because he then becomes one of a body of apotheosized ancestors (*kāraṇava*) who are believed to look after the *okka* of which they were members when alive. The ancestors are worshipped, and offerings of food and drink (*bhāraṇi*) are occasionally made to them.

Formerly the boys in an *okka*, all sons of agnatically related ^[857] males, grazed the *okka*'s cattle together, hunted birds, and played games. When they grew up all of them jointly looked after the ancestral estate under the guidance of the head of the *okka*.

Membership of an *okka* determines to a very large extent the ⁵⁹⁶ choice of a spouse. First of all, marital relations are forbidden ⁵⁸² between members of the same *okka*. Where agnation overflows the *okka*, the taboo extends to agnatic relatives who are not members of the *okka*. Again, children of sisters may not intermarry.

The ancestral, immovable property of an *okka* was formerly ⁵⁹⁶ regarded as impartible. It usually descended from one generation ⁴²⁸ of agnatically related males to another without being split up in the process. Partition did, however, occur when every adult member of the *okka* wanted it. But such cases were unusual—at least that is what one is told. Both the difficulty of partition and the preference for leviratic unions added to the strength of the *okka*.

Offices like the headmanship of a village or *nāḍ* or temple were ⁵⁹⁶ ⁶²²

596 hereditary in certain *okkas*. The eldest member of the senior
622 agnatic branch succeeded to the office in question.

596 Every high-caste *okka* has to send at least one man and one
627 woman to a wedding, festival, or a common village task like repairing a road, or weeding a temple compound; and all the adult males in an *okka* are required to attend a village dance or hunt. A defaulting *okka* is fined.

596 The members of an *okka* have to live together from birth till
829 death. They are bound together by numerous strong ties, and they co-operate in performing common tasks. After death, they become ancestors who continue to show an interest in their *okka* and demand propitiation from their descendants. The *okka* is something very much more than the group of living members in it at any given moment. It is a continuum through time, and the body of living members at any particular moment form only points on it. Coorgs themselves clearly state that the *okka* has a longer life than its members. They are also aware that an individual lives, in a social sense, as long as his *okka*. There is a great desire for the continuance of the *okka*, and there is no greater calamity than its extinction. When an *okka* is threatened with extinction certain traditional devices are resorted to to perpetuate it.

596 The ancestral house and estate are sacred, and even today a
[342] Coorg likes to have a wedding or funeral performed in the ancestral house. The unity and solidarity of an *okka* find expression in ritual. Its strength is projected to the 'mystical' plane.

An individual is normally identified with his *okka*, but such identification of the individual with his *okka* is in extra-*okka* contexts, and it does not at all mean that the *okka* in question is undivided from within. Normally the elementary families inside an *okka* are potential groups of fission. The principles of segregation of the sexes and the unity of the members of a generation which run right through Coorg society are also at work inside the *okka*, uniting some members against the others. There are also tensions between individuals, especially among the women members.

596 Every Coorg *okka* is bound by the ties of friendship (*aruvāme*) to
572 another neighbouring Coorg *okka*. This is a traditional relationship between two neighbouring Coorg *okkas*, and it involves certain ritual and social duties. It is frequently mutual, and affinal relations between the two friendly *okkas* are common.

596 Formerly every Coorg *okka* had one or more Poleyā or other low-

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 Every Coorg okka had one or more Palaya or other low-caste families attached to it as slaves. This was again an hereditary relationship, and between families and not between individuals.

II

In Coorg the agnatically related males form a corporate body enjoying the bulk of the rights in the okka. Men, thanks to patri-locality, are assured of continuous residence in the okka to which they belong, whereas the women have to leave their natal okka on marriage and become members of their conjugal okka. The men have a sense of belonging to the okka which is absent in all but the oldest women. A girl has to leave her natal okka on marriage, and this break in residential continuity is an important factor having legal and other consequences. It takes a long time¹ for her to be accepted into her conjugal okka: only when her children are grown up does she have the assured sense of belonging to her conjugal okka.

Sons are the comfort and hope of parents. They are the pillars of the okka. They are the means by which the okka continues to exist, and the continuity of the okka is a matter of the most profound concern to the members. Daughters are destined to leave their natal okkas and the children that are born to them enrich and perpetuate a different okka.

A woman is not a member of an okka in the sense a man is, the legal rights she enjoys are always inferior to a man's. There are compensations, however. A man enjoys his legal rights in one okka, whereas a woman enjoys hers in two, her natal and conjugal okkas. A girl is maintained in her natal okka till her marriage, or throughout her life if she decides to be a spinster. She has the right to return to her natal okka if, for example, her husband is impotent, or suffers from an incurable illness, or if her mother-in-law does not treat her properly. She has a right to return to her natal okka if she is divorced, assuming of course that she had not been divorced for a serious offence such as adultery with an Untouchable. Should she be guilty of such an offence she is thrown out of caste irrevocably and this means that she loses her rights in both her natal and her conjugal okkas.

At marriage her relatives give her gifts of jewellery, clothes, and vessels. These remain her property, and in the event of her divorce she brings them back to her natal okka.

¹ Cross-cousin marriage makes it easier for the girl to be absorbed into her conjugal okka.

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593 A person's rights in his or her *okka* are represented by twelve
 596 pebbles, euphemistically called 'twelve pieces of gold' (*pannaran-dachchi pon*). At marriage a girl loses most of her rights in her natal *okka* and obtains them in her conjugal *okka* instead. The bride's family friend transfers eleven pebbles to the groom's family friend. Eleven pebbles are transferred and not twelve. One pebble is retained by the girl's natal *okka* and this is because the bride retains some rights in her natal *okka*. She never loses them entirely. She has always a home from home. Her natal home is called *tā mané* (mother's home?), and a woman always feels tenderly towards it.

[60] A woman has a right to be maintained out of the funds of her conjugal *okka*. She is expected to do her share of domestic work under the guidance of the mistress of the house (*manépanikārti*). Not infrequently the mistress of the house is also her mother-in-law.

[422] A woman is entitled to cultivate a patch of ground for ginger and
 [434] turmeric, and to raise fowl and pigs, and the income from their sale is entirely *her* property which she may hold even against her husband or children. But she may work on this patch only after doing her share of domestic work for the day.¹

593 The preference for leviratic unions helped in the assimilation of
 596 a woman with her conjugal family. The Coorg saw, 'I will not come
 587 down the steps I have climbed up', refers to the fact that once a girl entered her conjugal home she usually stayed there for good, marrying one of the brothers of the husband in the event of the death of the latter. A girl on marriage becomes a member of her husband's *okka* and widowhood by itself does not alter her legal status. She continues to be a member of her conjugal *okka*. In fact, if there are no heirs to her dead husband's *okka* she might be called upon to raise up seed for it by entering into '*okka pariḷe*' or '*makka pariḷe*' alliance. She is not permitted, however, to raise up seed for her natal *okka*. There was an instance of this in Nālknāḍ many years ago and it resulted in bitter hostility between the widow's natal and conjugal *okkas*.

593 Rights in a joint family are referred to as *sammanda*, and *sam-*
 596 *manda* may be conferred or withdrawn. At marriage the bride acquires rights in the groom's house, and this is referred to as the

¹ Similarly, in the non-paddy season, men could cultivate small patches of land for ginger and turmeric. But they could only attend to them after they had done their share of the day's work on the ancestral estate.

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'giving of *summanda*'. *Sammanda* refers to the legal aspect of marriage, whereas *mūrta* refers to the solidarity aspect of it. These two together make up marriage. *Mūrta* has already been discussed at considerable length, and *sammanda* will be considered now. 593 596

III

The rights of membership in the groom's *okka* are conferred on the bride at the ritual of *sammanda*. The term *sammanda* is used both to indicate the rights of membership in an *okka* as well as the ritual in which such rights are conferred or withdrawn. The Kodagi term is a corruption of the Sanskrit *sambandha* which means, 'connexion, relation; connexion by marriage, matrimonial alliance, relationship, friendship, intimacy; kinsman; friend; ally'.¹

Usually, when a person acquires rights of membership in one *okka*, he (or she) by implication loses rights in another *okka*, even though such loss of rights may not be either complete or irrevocable. At an ordinary marriage, for instance, the *sammanda* ritual only confers rights on the bride in the groom's *okka*, but this acquisition of rights in another *okka* implies that the bride loses most of her rights in her natal *okka*. When a wife is divorced, the *sammanda* ritual that is performed severs the divorcee from her conjugal *okka* and she automatically reverts to her natal *okka*. In the case of a widow who wants to marry someone who is not a member of her late husband's *okka*, *sammanda* is first of all performed severing her connexion with her late husband's *okka*. On such ritual severance, she reverts to her natal *okka*, and *sammanda* is again performed, conferring on her rights in her new husband's *okka*. Between the loss of rights in her late husband's *okka* and the acquisition of rights in her new husband's *okka*, she is a member of her natal *okka*. 586 587

The two most important parts of marriage ritual are *mūrta* (part of *mangala*) and *sammanda*. There are three *mūrtas* in an ordinary marriage, two of which give expression to the solidarity prevalent between the groom or bride and his or her kindred respectively. In the third *mūrta* the creation of the new bond between the bride and groom is recognized by the groom's kindred expressing their solidarity with the bride and the bride's kindred with the groom. 593 596 585

¹ Macdonnell, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 339.

593 The two groups of kindred are brought together by the acquisition
 596 of two objects of common interest.
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While the *mūrta* part of marriage refers to the creation of a new bond between two individuals and the kin-groups in which each of them is born, *sammānda* defines and clarifies the new structural situation which has come into existence. It brings home to the participants that a new legal situation has arisen, that an individual has been transferred from one *okka* to another. *Sammānda* ritual is performed whenever such a structural and legal alteration is brought about. (See 'Table of *Sammānda* Rights' on pp. 173-5.)

1. The *sammānda* ritual performed at *kanni mangala* ('marriage of a virgin'), which is, incidentally, the most frequent type of marriage performed, confers on the bride rights of membership in the groom's *okka*.

[587] 2. (a) When a widow wants to marry a brother of the late husband, no fresh *sammānda* need be performed as no new legal situation has come into existence. The girl is a member of the second husband's *okka* even before marriage and she continues to be one after marriage.

593 When a girl marries in the *kanni mangala* way she acquires rights
 596 of membership in the *okka* of her husband. This is a simple enough
 421 fact, but in recent years the acquisition of property by individuals
 178 for themselves and not for their *okkas* has confused the issue. A few
 educated Coorgs have tried to maintain that a girl, on marriage,
 acquires only a share in her husband's share of the ancestral
 property, and consequently, when a widow marries the husband's
 younger brother, a fresh *sammānda* has to be performed. This is
 absurd. The whole idea of individual ownership of immovable
 property is recent in Coorg, and even more important is the fact
 that *sammānda* is more than the acquisition of rights in property.
 It is the acquisition of membership in an *okka*, with all its conse-
 quences, social, economic, legal, and ritual.

593 (b) When a widow wants to marry someone who is not a member
 596 of her late husband's *okka*, she is first of all made to sever her con-
 587 nexion with it, and such severance restores her to her natal *okka*.
 She is then given *sammānda* in her second husband's house.

[768] (c) The children of the widow are (usually) members of their
 father's *okka* except in certain cases which will be mentioned
 presently.

593 3. When a woman is divorced she loses her membership in her
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conjugal *okka* and reverts to her natal *okka*. Such reversion is 593
automatic and not conditional upon the unanimous consent of the 596
members of her natal *okka*. But if a woman has been divorced for 586
a grave offence, her natal *okka* might decide to have nothing to do
with her.

4. Children of unsanctioned unions are referred to as *mai kanat* 848
makka and they do not enjoy membership of their father's *okka* as 596
legitimate children do. In fact, they are not members of any *okka*. 593
Usually, however, elders bring pressure on the lover's kindred to
the grant of membership for the children in the lover's *okka*. But
if this is impossible, the children are made members of their
mother's natal *okka*.

If the children of an unsanctioned union and their mother are
given membership in the lover's *okka* while both the woman and
her lover are still alive it is called *bendu* (relative) *parijé*. If, how-
ever, the father dies before the children and their mother have been
given *sammāda* in his *okka*, then the elders try to see that *sammāda*
is given at least before the corpse is disposed of. Such a belated
granting of membership is called *kutṭa* (funeral pyre) *parijé*. This
enables the widow to take part in the funeral rites.

5. A boy from outside is adopted when there are no agnatic 596
descendants in an *okka*. *Sammāda* is performed, giving the boy in 597
question membership of the heirless *okka*. 428

6. Adoption is not, however, necessary if there is an unmarried 596
girl (or even the widow of a dead member) in the *okka* without an 591
heir. The girl is then married according to the custom of *okka parijé* 428
by which the children of the marriage become members of their
mother's natal *okka*. The man himself ceases to be a member of his
natal *okka* and becomes instead a member of his wife's natal *okka*.

The institution of *makka* (children) *parijé* is resorted to when it is 842
impossible to find a man willing to leave his natal *okka* and become 428
a member of the heirless *okka*. *Makka parijé* is a sanctioned union 596
between the daughter of the heirless *okka* and a man who, while
remaining a member of his natal *okka* and performing his duties
by it, also agrees to raise up seed for the heirless *okka*. He usually
stays in his natal home and visits his *makka parijé* 'wife' only
occasionally. The children of this alliance are members of their
mother's *okka*. It is usual for the *makka parijé* 'husband' to have
a wife married to him in the normal way and living with him in his
natal home. The children of the latter union, unlike the children of

596 *makka pariḷe* alliance, belong to their father's *okka*. Thus the *makka*
 842 *pariḷe* husband remains a member of his *natal okka* with a wife
 428 living with him, and in addition to this he undertakes to raise up
 seed for another *okka* which has no male heirs, but has instead
 only an unmarried girl. He only occasionally visits his *makka pariḷe*
 [837] wife. *Makka pariḷe* has the sanction of custom behind it and it has
 to be distinguished clearly from extra-marital alliances which are
 disapproved.

586 7. Children normally and usually belong to their father's *okka*.
 718 Consequently the children of a divorcee, or a widow who wants to
 587 marry someone not belonging to her late husband's *okka*, do not
 follow their mother but continue to remain in their natal home.
 In certain exceptional circumstances, however, the children of
 a widow or divorcee are allowed to become members of their
 mother's natal *okka*. The unanimous consent of the children's
 natal *okka* as well as that of their mother's natal *okka* is required in
 order to effect the transfer. If such consent is forthcoming from
 both sides the children's rights in their natal *okka* are ritually
 severed, after which they are given *sammānda* in their mother's
 natal *okka*. The marriage of the widow or divorcee subsequent to
 the children being given *sammānda* in her natal *okka* does not
 affect their legal status. They do not follow the mother into her
 new husband's *okka*. This would again require the unanimous
 consent of the members of the mother's natal *okka* and her new
 husband's *okka*.

593 Rights of membership in an *okka* are an extremely important
 596 matter affecting all the members in a variety of ways, social,
 economic, legal, and ritual. Both the loss as well as the acquisition
 of a member make a profound difference in the day-to-day inter-
 relations of members. The granting of membership and the loss of
 membership both become subject to *sammānda* ritual. *Sammānda*
 dramatically brings home to the parties concerned the implications
 of granting or withdrawing membership. As *sammānda* is a public
 occasion, the parties concerned in it will not be able to go back on
 it at a future date. The ritual that surrounds the giving or with-
 drawal of *sammānda* rights brings ritual sanctions into operation.

IV

594 The most frequent form of marriage is 'the marriage of a virgin'
 593 (*kanni mangala*), in which the bride leaves her natal *okka* and
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becomes a member of the groom's *okka*. *Sammānda* ritual effects the transference of the bride to the groom's *okka* and makes clear the legal implications of marriage to everyone concerned.

The *sammānda* ritual is performed at the entrance to the kitchen of the bride's ancestral house. The bride stands inside the kitchen while the groom stands outside, with the threshold in between them. The bride's family friend and two of her kinsmen stand on one side of the groom, while the latter's family friend, and two of his kinsmen stand on the other side. The other relatives and guests watch the proceedings from a distance. The family friends utter the traditional *sammānda* formulas.

I give below a free translation of the Kodagi text, and I should like to stress the fact that there is some elasticity in the formulae uttered.

Bride's Family Friend: 'The people of both the *nāds*, men of the house, relatives and family friend, are they all standing in rows?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'They stand.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'To the girl Pārvati of Nuchchimané-yānda *okka* whom we are about to give in marriage to the youth Muttanna of the Malchira *okka*, will you give the girl *sammānda* (rights) in the property of the groom's *okka*? Will you give her rights in the Malchira *okka*'s land which yields a thousand *bhaṭṭis*¹ of paddy, in the ten *kaṇḍas*² of pasture, in the cattle-stand, in the ten pairs of bullocks, in the house, in the garden, in the ten milch cows, in the bamboo receptacle used for milking, in the cattle-shed where the cattle are herded, in the paddy-flat,³ in the ridges of the paddy-flat, in the manure-heap, in the land which has silted up, in the paddy-field encroached upon by neighbours, in the runaway servant, in the elephant on heat, in the axe which, swinging, they cut, in the knife which, lifting, they cut, in the paddy in the granary, in the two-seer measure used for measuring paddy, in the seer-measure used for measuring rice, in the bell metal dish leaning against the wall, in the wall-lamp, in the stock of salt, in the kitchen stove, in the buried treasure, in the stock of thread, in the piece of cloth used for extracting thread, in the piece of iron used for making

¹ The term '*dyira bhaṭṭi bhūmi*', or 'land which yields 1,000 *bhaṭṭis* of paddy' is a conventional term and only means that the groom's *okka* is rich. [204]

² A *kaṇḍa* is a plot of land of a certain size.

³ Rice is cultivated usually in small ridged-up flats or plots. It is very necessary at various stages in its cultivation to stand water for days, if not weeks, in the flats. [243]

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needles, in the tiny *chundekka*¹ fruit, and in brief, in everything from one to one hundred, will you give her rights (*sammānda*)?'
 Groom's Family Friend: 'We give.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'On the marriage of our child into your *okka* our servants will carry on their heads goods worth a thousand *birāns*² in a box worth five hundred *birāns*. If this goes, who is the family friend to be held responsible for the loss?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Who are you?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I belong to Chirāṇḍa *okka*, and I am the family friend of Malchira *okka*.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Are you the family friend attached to their soil (*maṇṇaruva*), or have you been hired with gold for the occasion (*poṃmaruva*)?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I am both the traditional family friend and the family friend hired with gold for the occasion.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Here, take these twelve pieces of gold.'

[195] 'Pieces of gold' is only a euphemism, however: the groom's family friend is actually given pebbles. He is given only eleven pebbles, one pebble being retained as already mentioned.

Groom's Family Friend: 'I have received eleven pieces of gold. If your innocent child, the girl who is married to our boy, complains that the rice is too hot, or that the curry is too pungent, or that her father-in-law is abusive, or that her mother-in-law is niggardly, or that her husband is impotent, or that she cannot stay in her husband's house, or that her husband's people are poor, and thus complaining, she goes back to her natal *okka* and sits there, who is the person to be held responsible for telling her what is right and repairing the wrong, and for providing us (who have gone to fetch her), for our return journey, with servants for company and torches to light our way?'

Bride's Family Friend: 'I.'

Groom's Family Friend: 'Who are you?'

Bride's Family Friend: 'I belong to Appachettolāṇḍa *okka*, and I am the family friend of Nuchchimaneyāṇḍa *okka*.'

[245] ¹ *Chundekka* is a tiny fruit growing on a bushy plant used for hedging. It is a vegetable, and in the above context it means a thing of small value, or a contemptible thing.

² *Birān* is a corruption of *varaha*, an ancient Indian coin worth about Rs 3-8-0.

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Groom's Family Friend: 'Are you the traditional family friend, or have you been hired with gold for the present occasion?' 596
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Bride's Family Friend: 'Both.'

Groom's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.' He pays a *pana* to the bride's family friend.

Bride's Family Friend: 'If our young girl comes upon some misfortune, who is the family friend to be held responsible for sending her to her natal *okka* with servants for company and torches for the road?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.'

He pays a *pana* to the groom's family friend.

The ritual of *sammanda* is now over.

V

The transfer of pebbles is an essential part of *sammanda*. According to an old saying, 'the weight of a person in gold is twelve pieces' (*ponnu tūka manushya pannarandachchi*). The totality of rights which a person has in the *okka* of which he is a member is represented by twelve pebbles referred to as 'pieces of gold'. At marriage the bride's family friend gives eleven pebbles to the groom's family friend as most of the rights which the bride had in her natal *okka* have been given up and acquired in the groom's *okka* instead. One pebble is retained because the bride's connexion with her natal *okka* is too deep and fundamental to be totally destroyed. In fact, if the bride happens to be divorced later, she has a right to return to her natal home. As the old saying has it, 'when a girl falls upon evil days, she goes back to her natal home'.

Some Coorgs have taken the theory of the estimation of the value of the rights of a person in his (or her) *okka* rather literally. They argue that each 'piece of gold' represents the traditional estimate of the price of a part of the ancestral property and at the marriage of a virgin the bride's relatives buy up her rights in her natal *okka* and pay her the price. The bride buys herself membership of the groom's *okka* with the money she has acquired.

Pieces of gold do not seem to have been used in the past instead of pebbles. The use of pebbles is clearly symbolic and it enables the persons concerned to understand the legal implications of marriage.

593 The groom's family friend who receives the eleven pebbles
 596 hands them over to the matron of honour who ties them up in a
 585 bundle. She ties the bundle to the frontal breast-knot (*molékaṣ*) of
 the bride. Just before the bride leaves for the groom's house this
 bundle is put into the box containing the bride's trousseau.

593 Nowadays it is not usual for the pebbles to be kept for any length
 596 of time. Neither do Coorgs regard these pebbles as sacred. But
 586 elderly informants consider that the pebbles *ought* to be kept in the
 768 groom's house and returned in the event of divorce or widow-
 hood.

When a woman is returning to her natal *okka* on being divorced,
 or when a widow is returning to her natal *okka* preparatory to
 marrying someone who is not a member of her late husband's
okka, the divorcée's or widow's connexion with her conjugal *okka*
 is ritually severed. This is referred to as 'giving up the pebbles'
 (*kallumbara kaipa*).¹ The bride's family friend and groom's family
 friend break the connexion in set formulas which are the same as
 those used in marriage but for certain necessary alterations.

In the *sammānda* ritual performed at the 'marriage of a virgin',
 the emphasis is on the fact of the bride obtaining rights in the
 groom's *okka*, and not on her losing her rights in her natal *okka*.
 When a widow or divorcée is returning to her natal *okka*, the
sammānda ritual that is performed severs her connexion with her
 conjugal *okka*. In both cases, however, the loss of membership of
 an *okka* is accompanied by gaining membership of another. The
 difference in emphasis however leads to the one being described as
 the 'conferring of *sammānda*' and the other as the 'giving up of
 pebbles'.

Children normally belong to their father's *okka*, and they remain
 in their natal home even when their mother leaves her conjugal
 house on widowhood or divorce. Very young children, however,
 accompany their mother to her natal or new home, but they return
 to their father's house on attaining their third or fourth year.

When a divorcée (or widow who is remarrying into a different
okka from her late husband's) is given permission to visit her
 children in their father's house, the eleven pebbles are not returned
 by the first husband's family friend to the family friend of her

¹ The same ceremony is also referred to as 'kal mara kaipa', i.e. 'giving up
 stone and tree'. Stone and tree are said to stand for the estate of the *okka* in
 question. See N. Chinnappa, *op. cit.*, p. 508.

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natal *okka*. Her connexion with her conjugal house is, however, ritually severed with the usual formulas. 593
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In some rare cases the children of a widow or divorcée are given rights in their mother's natal *okka*. In such a case the rights which the children have in their father's *okka* are ritually given up before they are acquired in their mother's natal *okka*. The pebbles are transferred from the family friend of the children's father's *okka* to the family friend of their mother's natal *okka*. The adopted son similarly loses his membership of his natal *okka* and acquires membership of the adoptive *okka*. The *okka parié* husband also transfers himself from his natal *okka* to his conjugal *okka*. Pebbles are transferred in both the above instances. 586
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The conferment as well as withdrawal of membership has important results on the relations of the various members towards each other. The ritual brings home to those present the meaning of what is taking place. Publicity is ensured by the presence of a few local and caste elders in addition to the representatives of the *okkas* concerned. Such publicity gives the event a certain finality. Lastly, as the ritual takes place in a very sacred part of the ancestral house, before the domestic deities and ancestors, solemnity is added to the occasion which is also invested with ritual sanctions.

VI

Sammanda constitutes the legal part of marriage: for instance, the bride will become a widow if the groom dies after *sammanda*, whereas his death before *sammanda* would not have such an effect on her. 517
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It is usual for a Coorg widow to remarry. If, however, she is past middle age and has grown-up children, she does not remarry, but continues to stay in her late husband's house looking after her children.

A widow who wishes to remarry might marry either a brother, real or classificatory, of the late husband, or a total stranger. As mentioned earlier, there is a preference for leviratic unions among Coorgs, and where it is possible, a widow marries someone who is not only related as brother to her late husband, but also belongs to the same *okka* as him. In the latter event, no new *sammanda* is necessary.

The ritual conferment of membership has been described earlier,

587 and consequently only the ritual withdrawal of membership will
 • 596 be described here. Set formulas very similar to those used for
 593 conferment of membership are used at the withdrawal.

The ritual is performed in the central hall of the late (or divorced) husband's house. Two kinsmen of the widow (or divorcée) and the family friend of her natal *okka* stand in a row facing two kinsmen of the dead (or divorced) husband, and the family friend of his *okka*. The articles which the widow (or divorcée) brought with her to her conjugal house are kept in the central hall in the boxes in which they were brought at the wedding. The presence of the widow or divorcée herself is not deemed necessary.

The widow's family friend opens the proceedings by asking the late husband's family friend whether all the concerned men are present, and the late husband's family friend replies in the affirmative.

Widow's Family Friend: 'Muthamma of such-and-such an *okka* married Ponnappa of such-and-such an *okka*. Ponnappa was short-lived. Owing to Muthamma's evil destiny, she was not permitted the good fortune of living together with her husband for a long time. We will now take back your girl Muthamma according to the adage, "when a girl comes upon evil days, she goes back to her natal *okka*".'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'Yes, that is according to old usage.'

Widow's Family Friend: 'When Muthamma married Ponnappa, her servants carried on their heads goods worth a thousand *birāns* in boxes worth five hundred *birāns*. Whatever goods now remain, after having been eaten and worn, may I take them back?'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'Yes, that is according to old usage.'

Widow's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'I have received it. When Muthamma married Ponnappa she was given membership of Ponnappa's *okka*. She lost membership of her natal *okka* and you gave us eleven pieces of gold on that occasion which we now return.'

He returns eleven pebbles to the widow's family friend.

Widow's Family Friend: 'I have received them.'

• Late Husband's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.'

Widow's Family Friend: 'I have received it.'

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The goods which the bride, now widowed, brought into her conjugal house are then removed to the veranda. The widow's family friend selects two or three pieces of cloth from the widow's possessions and puts them into a box. He carries the box into the central hall and says, 'Since our girl ate here we should like to leave this box here'. The elders of the late husband's *okka* are theoretically free to accept or reject this gift. But in practice a definite sentiment seems to exist against its acceptance.¹

VII

Coorg marriages are very stable, and divorce is not at all common. In fact, an exceptionally able and well-informed elder could not recall more than seven cases of divorce in the last fifty years. The most frequent ground for divorce seems to be adultery on the wife's part. Incompatibility between the husband and wife, impotence of the husband, cruelty, and lack of thrift on the wife's part are also grounds for divorce, though these seem to have been very rare. A wife was expected to obey the husband in most matters, and she worked under the supervision of the mistress of the house in matters of domestic economy, and consequently incompatibility and lack of thrift became significant only in rare cases.

Where a Coorg woman committed adultery with a member of an Untouchable caste she was summarily thrown out of caste. Adultery with a Coorg man was not as serious a matter, but still far from trivial. In the latter case, her husband was certain to turn her out of his house and her natal *okka* would be not at all friendly to her. If, however, her parents were alive, they would offer her shelter even though they strongly disapproved of what she had done.

The attitude of the public towards a divorcée is different from that towards a widow. Widowhood is a misfortune, decreed by God or the result of *karma*, whereas divorce reveals a serious flaw in the divorcée's character. This is natural enough if the woman has been divorced for adultery, or lack of thrift, or incompatibility. It is a woman's duty to adjust herself to her husband and his *okka*,

¹ Shri K. J. Chengappa tells me that where the widow has children by her first marriage and it is decided to allow these children to remain in their late father's *okka*, all the widow's goods are not removed to her natal *okka*. A good part is left in the late husband's *okka* because of the children. She takes to her second husband's house only a small part of her original trousseau.

and failure to do so renders her suspect. It is fairly easy for a widow to secure a husband, while there is great reluctance to marrying a divorcée. Again, a widow is permitted to marry after a minimum period of six months have elapsed after the death of her husband, while a divorcée may remarry only after a year has elapsed since the granting of divorce. A widow is entitled to visit her children in their father's house, whereas a divorcée is not entitled to do so. Finally, a widow who has returned to her natal *okka* may marry again into her late husband's *okka*, whereas the doors of the former husband's *okka* are for ever shut to the divorcée.¹

[587] But the divorcée and widow are alike in this, that neither has a husband, and a woman, normally speaking, should not be without a husband. An unattached woman is a threat to the stability of existing social relations and to the moral code of the community. The widow and divorcée are both regarded with a certain amount of suspicion.

VIII

533 The children of an ordinary marriage are members of their father's *okka*. The fact of birth confers this all-important right on them and no special ceremony conferring membership is necessary. 858 In *okka parié* and *makka parié* unions, however, the children belong to the natal *okka* of their mother, and this is only natural as the object of such alliances is the continuation of the mother's natal *okka*, threatened with extinction for lack of an agnatic male descendant.

The important fact is that the children of a sanctioned union are members of an *okka*, either their father's or mother's, and such membership they acquire by reason of birth. But the children of an unsanctioned union do not have membership in any *okka*, and they have to be given membership in either their father's or mother's *okka* some time subsequent to their birth.

586 In those rare cases where the existence of very special reasons lead 768 to the children of a widow or divorcée being permitted to be transferred to their mother's *okka* from their father's *okka*; the unanimous consent of the members of both the concerned *okkas* is regarded as essential. After the widow or divorcée has been ritually

[539] ¹ A Coorg saw says that one may marry a widow but not a divorcée: *hejja ponnana bávalu, bujja ponnana bávalaga*.

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severed from her conjugal *okka* the children are also severed from their paternal *okka*. While the widow or divorcée automatically reverts to her natal *okka*, her children have to be given rights at a special *sammanda* ceremony.¹ 586 768

If, however, the widow or divorcée marries again, the children do not follow her automatically into her new husband's *okka*. They are members of their mother's *okka*, and the unanimous consent of the members of their mother's *okka* and that of the members of the mother's new husband's *okka* is necessary to transfer them from one to the other.

Elders usually make efforts to ensure that the children of an unsanctioned union are given membership of their father's *okka*. It is clearly recognized that he who had the pleasure of being genitor has the duty of becoming pater as well, and this means that the children of an unsanctioned union have to be made members of the genitor's *okka*. Where, however, for various reasons the children cannot be given membership of their father's *okka*, they are given membership of their mother's *okka*. It is feared that if the children do not have membership in any *okka* people will refer to them contemptuously as 'the children born of adultery' (*mai kanat makka*).² 848 596 627

When a girl becomes pregnant as the result of union with a man not married to her, the girl's relatives press for recognition of the union. The man involved and his people might agree at once, in which case the girl's relatives have to go to the boys' home and give a feast to the relatives of the man and members of his village. The girl's relatives should carry with them all the provisions of this dinner, excepting mustard and salt.³

¹ The *sammanda* formulas used on this occasion are fundamentally similar to the formulas used in other cases. That is why I have not described them.

² In the folktale of Kanniada Kāmāyā, the boy Kāmāyā's playmates refer to him contemptuously as 'one who is without a father'. Kāmāyā is greatly hurt by this and tells his mother that he will fast unto death if the identity and whereabouts of his father are not disclosed. His mother tells him that he is miraculously born, and that his father is the very sacred axe (*chandrayudha*) which is a symbol for a deity. [539]

³ Among Coorgs as among other patrilineal and patrilocal castes of south India, a girl has her first confinement in her natal home. The first confinement is believed to be a dangerous and critical affair, and it is considered best for the girl to have her mother and other relatives of her natal-home with her at this time. [844]

During the fifth or seventh month of a girl's first pregnancy, her mother and other relatives go to their affines carrying with them all the provisions of a

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848 After the dinner is over, the girl is given *sammanda* in the man's
 596 *okka*. When the members of the man's *okka* agree to give *sam-*
 627 *manda* after the girl has given birth to a baby, both the mother
 and newly born child are admitted to membership.

Sometimes the agnatic relatives of the man might refuse to give *sammanda* to the woman and her children as long as both the man and woman are alive. But death of one of them might bring about a change in their attitude as the surviving spouse and children have important parts to play in the funeral ritual. If it is the woman who is dead, the giving of *sammanda* enables the corpse to be buried in the man's *okka*'s burial-ground.

The members of the genitor's village who are present when *sammanda* is given should be collectively paid witness-money of a rupee.

The procedure which has been described above holds good whether the woman concerned is a spinster or a widow.

IX

526 A Coorg proverb says, 'When the cattle-shed was destined to
 428 come to an end only bull calves were born, and when the *okka* was
 585 destined to come to an end only girls were born'. As mentioned
 earlier, an *okka* is threatened with extinction if there are no male heirs. If, however, there is an unmarried girl in such an *okka* she is married in either the *okka parié* or *makka parié* way. In both these forms the children born of the union perpetuate the mother's natal *okka*.

In the *sammanda* ritual performed at an *okka parié* marriage, the bride's family friend definitely asks the groom's family friend whether in view of the absence of heirs in the bride's *okka* the groom is prepared to stand as 'the trunk' of the bride's *okka*.

No *sammanda* ritual is, however, necessary at a *makka parié* marriage as the groom does not become a member of the bride's *okka*. A rite is performed which makes clear the implications of the kind of union entered into: the bride's family friend says, 'Since there is no heir in Muthamma's natal *okka*, Ponnappa of such-and-such an *okka* has agreed to unite with Muthamma, and it is the

[844] dinner, barring salt and mustard. The salt and mustard are provided by the affines. The affines and members of the affines' village are invited to this dinner which is called *kāl beppa* (keeping food). After the dinner has been given, the girl's relatives take the girl to her natal home.

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responsibility of Mother Kāvēri and the ancestors of Muthamma's *okka* to see that the couple have sons, and prosper'. 425 596

It is essential to note that in a *makka pariḷe*¹ union the husband 585 does not acquire any rights in the *makka pariḷe* wife's house, except the right to food and clothing during his stay there.

Adoption is resorted to only when there is neither an agnatic 597 male descendant nor an unmarried girl in the *okka*. Formerly, 428 during the time of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas, the ruler's permission was necessary for an adoption, and for an *okka pariḷe* or *makka pariḷe* union. This was because these devices could be used to shut out a distant agnatic male relative. But it is certain that the local elders would have tried to prevent an adoption to defraud a distant agnatic kinsman.

Two of the three devices for ensuring the continuity of an *okka* 596 threatened with extinction because of the lack of agnatic descendants involve the granting of membership to an outside male, while the third does not. But whether membership of the *okka* is granted or not, each of the three customary devices is enveloped in ritual and involves the gathering together of the concerned relatives, family friends, and villagers. The legal and social consequences of each device are made clear at a solemn ritual occasion held in the sacred ancestral house of the *okka* whose continuity is threatened.

X

The implications of marriage, its rights and duties, are made 585 clear at the performance of *sammanda* ritual. Most of the rites 591 performed subsequent to *sammanda* dramatize the transfer of the girl from her natal *okka* to her conjugal *okka*.

To begin with, the groom goes to the bride sitting alone in the kitchen of her natal house, performs *mūrta* to her, and presents her with a purse containing coins (*chila paṇa*). The groom ties the purse to the frontal breast-knot of the bride's *sari*, but before doing so he unties the purse presented earlier by the mother. Thus the purse presented by the groom replaces the purse presented by the bride's mother. The newly created affinal bond replaces the uterine bond. In a patrilocal and patrilineal society,

¹ *Makka pariḷe* is not restricted to unmarried girls only. For instance, a widow might be called upon to raise up seed for her conjugal *okka* by entering into a *makka pariḷe* alliance.

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brother (classificatory): the father's first, second, and third cousins⁵⁸² are his 'brothers', and a daughter of any of these relatives is avoided for marriage. Coorgs remember their agnatic connexions even where they overflow the *okka*, and marriage with the daughter or sister of an agnatic relative is avoided.

Every *okka* has a distinct name, a fact which helps in the avoid-⁵⁸⁶ance of incestuous relations. When a branch of an *okka* splits off⁵⁸² and in course of time becomes a separate *okka*, there is no inter-marriage between the parent-*okka* and the offspring-*okka*. Thus there are two Biddanda *okkas*, and there is no intermarriage between their members as they remember that they are agnatically related and that in the past they constituted a single *okka*.

Sometimes the possession of a common name by several *okkas* does not indicate the prevalence of any connexion between them. For instance, there are several *okkas* called Mukkāṭira, a name originally acquired, in each case, by the founder of the *okka* holding a certain office in a temple. In such a case, there is usually a prefix specifying which Mukkāṭira *okka* is meant: Kunjalagēri Mukkāṭira refers to the Mukkāṭira *okka* of Kunjalagēri village and not to any other Mukkāṭira *okka*.

A man is also prohibited from marrying the daughter of his⁵⁸² mother's sister (classificatory). Terminologically a man's mother's⁶⁰¹ sisters are identified with his mother, and their daughters with his sisters. The mother's line may be called the 'buried line', and it comes into prominence negatively in the avoidance of a mother's sister's daughter for marriage, and positively in the latter relative's being identified with the sister. Such accordance of importance to maternal relatives is an attempt to balance the enormous importance accorded to paternal relatives in a kinship-system the foundation of which is the patrilineal, patrilocal *okka*.

The only relative a man may marry is his cross-cousin, his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter. Coorgs, like other speakers of the Dravidian languages, have a classificatory kinship terminology which accords with cross-cousin marriage.

Cross-cousin marriage is preferred and common. It is of the⁵⁸² symmetrical variety though there seems to be a slight preference⁵³⁹ for marriage with the father's sister's daughter as compared with the mother's brother's daughter. A proverb tells us, 'The father's sister's daughter's body is sweet, the juice of the blue sugar-cane is

582 sweet'. In the ancient marriage song which is sung at every marriage
 [539] the bride is made out to be the daughter of the groom's father's
 sister. An old saying tells us, '*tān banda baṣṣena marapakāga*'. (one
 should not forget the path by which one has come): a woman is
 enjoined not to forget her natal *okka* from which she has come into
 her conjugal *okka*. One daughter at least ought to go in marriage to
 the natal *okka* of her mother. Such a system binds two *okkas* very
 closely; and the loss of a girl to an *okka* is compensated later by the
 return of the latter's daughter to her mother's natal *okka* in
 marriage. This is unlike the other variety of cross-cousin marriage
 in which one *okka* is perpetually recruiting girls from another *okka*
 without ever repaying.

582 The traditional preference for marriage with a cross-cousin
 585 comes out in a rite which is performed at marriage. When the
 groom is leading the bride out of her house after the performance
 of *sammanda*, he is obstructed at the main door of the bride's
 house by the bride's cross-cousin. The cross-cousin says that the
 bride belongs to him and that he will not let her go. It is only when
 the groom has given him a gold coin that he lets the bride go. The
 cross-cousin adds another gold coin to the one the groom has given
 him and ties the two together in a corner of the bride's *sari*. The
 gold coins now belong to the bride. The incident is nowadays
 looked upon as a joke.

606 The preference for cross-cousin marriage expresses itself in
 ritual, and there are structural reasons for such preference. Among
 ● 596 the patrilineal castes all over India, not only is the conflict between
 mother-in-law and daughter-in-law a common feature of joint
 family existence, the inability of the daughter-in-law to get on
 with her affinal kindred is frequently cited as the chief reason for
 fission in the joint family. The Kannaḍa peasants of Mysore have
 [539] a proverb, 'A thousand moustaches can live together, but not four
 breasts'.

The daughter-in-law is a stranger to the groom's kin-group and
 her interests frequently do not harmonize with the interests of the
 groom's kin-group. The latter want the joint family to remain
 united, and the bride obedient to her mother-in-law, and able to
 get on with her husband's brother's wives and the husband's
 sisters. The bride finds such an existence irksome, and she would
 like her husband to leave his joint family and found a separate
 household. Her kin-group are usually behind her in this, either

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overtly or covertly. But there are other balancing factors: a girl is told from childhood onwards by every elder in her natal household that she should obey her husband and parents-in-law, and that the greatest thing she could do would be to be approved by her affinal kindred. Besides, a man is bound by the most powerful ties to his joint family; and even more important than this is the fact that he does not want to be known as the one who split his joint family.

Where an adult male is entitled to demand his share of the ancestral property, marriage with a stranger girl increases the chances of the division of the joint family. On the other hand, marriage with a relative makes such a division less likely. But among Coorgs certain relatives like the sisters and daughters of agnatically related males and the daughters of one's mother's sisters' daughters are tabooed for marriage. Only cross-cousins remain eligible.

As has already been mentioned, the Coorg *okka* is a very much stronger institution than the joint family of the higher castes of south India. The theory of the impartibility of its traditional property and the preference for leviratic unions buttress it strongly against fission. Add to it the fact that a cross-cousin is commonly chosen for marriage and it becomes almost impregnable.

The departure of a bride from her natal to her conjugal house on the second day of marriage is an occasion charged with emotion: I have seen an adult Coorg brother break down with grief when his sister left for her husband's home after the *sammanda* ceremony. Parents are aware that when they marry their daughter they lose her.

This breaking of the brother-sister bond which is inevitable in a patrilocal society leaves a void which is only filled when the children of the brother and sister intermarry. It may be said that the wound takes a generation to heal. This is only so if it is regarded as an individual instance, as the completion of a single cycle. But it is seen differently if each marriage is regarded as the repayment of a debt incurred a generation ago, as the working out of the principle of reciprocity. The links which are forged today by marriages between two *okkas* are only a continuation of the links which have been forged in the past. The individual instances appear only as points on two or more parallel lines which are linked all the way through. Such a view mitigates the sense of loss which the parents of the girl experience, and also gives them a sense of security as far as the girl is concerned. The prior kinship bonds which prevail

582 between the two affinal groups ensure not only the stability of the
 596 marriage, but also contribute to the solidarity of each of the two
 okkas connected by the marriage, and especially of the groom's *okka*.

XII

587 A woman is socially identified with her sisters, and a person's
 582 mother's sisters are identified with his mother. As sororatic unions
 596 are preferred among Coorgs, a mother's younger sister steps into
 the mother's shoes in the event of the mother's death before her
 sister's marriage. It is regarded as natural for the step-mother to hate
 her step-children, and a widower marries his dead wife's younger
 sister because he believes that the latter is more likely than any-
 body else to treat her step-children well.

A man's mother's sisters' children are regarded as his brothers
 and sisters. He may not marry his mother's sister's daughter: such
 a union would be incestuous. The importance of the mother's
 sisters is stressed in their identification with the mother and in
 identifying their children with one's brothers and sisters.

582 It has been remarked earlier that the marriage of a girl causes a
 596 change in the established relations of the members of her natal as
 well as conjugal *okka*. The former *okka* loses a member, whereas
 the latter gains one. The members of one group have to adjust
 themselves to the loss of a member who was with them for seven-
 teen or eighteen or more years, and whom they all love deeply,
 whereas the other group have to admit a grown stranger into their
okka. This is the inevitable result of the rule of patrilocal residence.
 The marriage of a daughter means her exile from her natal home.
 But cross-cousin marriage ensures that the daughter in question
 goes into an *okka* with which strong bonds of solidarity already
 exist. Further, the daughter's daughters return to their mother's
 natal *okka* on their (former's) marriage, while the daughter's sons
 provide a home for their mother's brother's daughters. In other
 words, marriage with a cross-cousin minimizes the disturbances
 resulting from marriage.

604 The maternal uncle is an important relative: he is the mother's
 [582] brother, and represents the mother's natal *okka*. Perhaps he him-
 self has married his sister's husband's sister—cross-cousin marriage
 is symmetrical among Coorgs. He is also likely to be father-in-law
 to his sister's children. But he belongs to a different *okka* from his

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The daughter looks upon her natal home as a haven of refuge in the first few years of married life. Her first confinement takes place in her natal home because it is considered proper for the girl to be with people with whom she can be at ease.

A proverb tells us that 'the mother's love for her daughter rendered her unfit to live with her husband, the sitting hen's love destroyed the egg'. An overfond mother tries to drag her married daughter away from her husband, and this might eventually break up the marriage.

The elementary family, which is a part of the *okka* or joint family, is weakly structured among Coorgs. This is because the *okka* is so strong that it does not permit the elementary families inside it to be strong units. There is no separate term for the elementary family.

The solidarity of the elementary family does not obtain expression in ritual. It is true that the affinal tie is very strongly emphasized in mourning, and the eldest son is a mourner of the first grade, and sometimes a younger son or daughter is also called upon to become a first-grade mourner. But usually the younger children of the dead person are not distinguished from the other younger members of the *okka*.

The fact that the elementary family is weakly structured among Coorgs does not mean that it has no solidarity; and in the last 120 years its solidarity has been increasing at the expense of the solidarity of the *okka* of which it is a part. Coorg ancestral houses are large, sprawling affairs, and the members of each elementary family within an *okka* occupy either a room, or a couple of rooms, or an entire wing. Sometimes they occupy one of two or three houses belonging to the *okka*. A member of the M-*okka* once told me, 'When this house was built over seventy years ago there were only two or three people in it. But our ancestors were so wise that they built a large house with a number of rooms so that all their descendants could live in it.' Now each of the married brothers and his children occupy a room or a couple of rooms inside it.

The unity of the elementary families within the *okka* appears in certain non-ritual contexts. For instance, parents take sides with their own children against the children of another member of the *okka* in the frequent quarrels of children. A proverb tells us that 'the *okka* went to ruin over the children's talk'. Quarrels arise when 'the children of the *okka* play together, and these children's quarrels

- 594 lead to the elders having an argument, an argument which might
 596 later split the *okka*. Another proverb tells us that 'children's play
 [59] leads to the *okka*'s ruin'.

Marriage is very nearly universal among Coorgs, and bachelors
 589 and spinsters are very rare indeed. A man's social personality is
 fully developed only when he has married and become a father, and
 consequently a bachelor is regarded as one who is not fully
 developed.

It is believed that a bachelor dies with many unsatisfied desires
 [764] in his heart. While a gold coin is placed in the mouth of the corpse
 of a married man, a bitter fruit is kept in the mouth of a bachelor's
 [775] corpse. A bachelor's ghost is regarded as mischievous, and the
 ghost of a bachelor-warrior as even more mischievous.

[769] During the periodical ancestor-propitiations in a Coorg *okka*,
 songs are sung recounting the deeds of each ancestor. The name
 of a bachelor-ancestor is omitted from such a song unless he had
 proved an exceptional success in life, or had died while fighting in
 battle. Such exceptional qualifications are not, however, required
 from a married ancestor. A bachelor's personality is normally
 incomplete, and only the achievement of exceptional social impor-
 tance can outweigh this fact.

581 Sanskritic Hinduism prescribes marriage for every adult. And
 593 only a married man may perform certain important rites.¹ A man
 and his wife constitute a single spiritual entity, and a wife shares
 in the spiritual merit acquired by her husband. Sanskritic Hindu-
 ism also enjoins on the wife the duty of effacing herself completely
 for her husband.

593 The strength of the husband-wife bond and the subservience of
 783 the wife to the husband express themselves in ritual. When a Coorg
 couple bathe in the source of the river Kāvēri during the Kāvēri
 Festival, the ends of their garments are tied together: Hindus in
 every part of India observe this custom when they are bathing in
 a sacred river or tank.

593 Until recent years a Coorg bride and groom never sat together
 585 for the performance of *mūrta*. *Mūrta* was performed separately for
 the groom and bride in their respective houses on the first day of

¹ A Brahmin friend of mine married soon after the lapse of the required period
 of a year after the death of his father because the performance of certain rites like
 the periodical offerings to dead ancestors and the worship of the deities tradi-
 tionally worshipped by his family required him to be married. He was the eldest
 son of his father.

593 bond. It is obvious that among Coorgs, Sanskritic Hinduism has
 589 had such a strengthening effect and has contributed to subordinating the wife to her husband.

XIV

- 596 At any given moment of time the *okka* is made up of a group of agnatically related males descended from a common ancestor, and their wives and children. When the older members of the *okka* die the younger members take their places. The dynamic element in the *okka* consists in the younger members succeeding to the positions left vacant by the death of the older members. The *okka* may be looked upon as a certain configuration of persons bound together by agnatic and affinal ties, and this configuration remains more or less constant over a period of time. The generation-depth of an *okka* might expand by a birth, or contract by a death, a segment may cling on or split off, but in the main there is a certain constancy of configuration which makes it an *okka*. The members of an *okka* come and go, but the *okka* goes on for ever. They are like people on an escalator, those on the bottom stairs moving gradually up to the top and finally disappearing.

An *okka* not only looks forward to the future but also stretches back into the past. Each *okka* has a distinct tradition with which its living members are acquainted. The 'house song' (*mané pāṣ*) sung at the harvest festival and ancestor-propitiation enables the younger members to learn the 'history' of the *okka*.

- 596 The dead ancestor of a Coorg *okka* is called *kāraṇava*. *Kāraṇa*
 769 in Sanskrit means, among other things, 'the cause, instrument, origin, principle, the cause of being, a father'.¹ All the ancestors are not of the same rank: the founder of the *okka* has a higher status than the others. He is called *mūla puruṣa* (original man) or *ādi guru* (first preceptor), or *ādi kāraṇava* (first ancestor), and his higher status is reflected in the fact that at the periodical ancestor-propitiations a pig must be sacrificed to him, while to the other ancestors a fowl will do.² Also the Baṇṇa oracle dons the upper part of his *téré* equipment in the Founder's honour. For the others

[702] ¹ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 274.

² Pigs are also usually sacrificed to bachelor-ancestors who died a violent death, and to elderly males who died subsequent to the performance of the previous ancestor-propitiation. But elderly women who died after the performance of the previous ancestor-propitiation are offered only fowl.

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he wears only the lower part, which covers him below the waist like ⁷⁶⁹ a skirt. The Founder is revered more than the other ancestors. ⁵⁹⁶ But sometimes the Founder¹ is outshone in importance by one of his descendants who was a famous fighter, or a commander of the Rāja's armies, or one of the Rāja's ministers, or a famous magician, or was noted for his piety. The Founder has a start over the other ancestors, but this start does not prevail against a very powerful descendant. Thus a Coorg carries the social importance which he achieves for himself into the world of his ancestors.

People who die on the battlefield, or who die a violent death, become *biras*, and *biras* are regarded as more powerful than other ancestors. The Karavaṇḍa, Biddaṇḍa, and Kaliyāṇḍa *okkas* have ^[778] separate shrines for *biras* called *bira kōṭē*.²

A man who is killed by a tiger or panther becomes a 'tiger spirit' (*nari pūda*), and at the ancestor-propitiation the Baṇṇa oracle paints his face yellow and marks it with black stripes or spots just before he is possessed by the 'tiger spirit'.

The wife of an ancestor is called a *kāraṇachchi* or *sōḍalachchi* or *toḍapijji*. It is believed that ancestresses are particularly liable to possess children, another instance of the Coorg belief in the strength of the bond which binds a mother to her children.

Every ancestral house has some place for the worship of the ⁷⁶⁹ ancestors of the *okka*. This might be a separate shrine called ³⁵³ *kaimaḍa*, or a low, earthen platform (*kāraṇava tarē*) built round ⁷⁷⁸ the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. The *kaimaḍa* is a single-room shrine usually facing east, the sacred direction. When an ancestor-propitiation (*kāraṇava téré*) is performed, wooden figurines representing each of the ancestors, or crude figures embossed on sheets of copper or silver, or gold, or even slabs of stone with figures sculptured on it, are kept before a lamp lighted in the ancestor-shrine. The Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* perform an ancestor-propitiation whenever an elder dies, and on this occasion they have wooden

¹ The Founder is usually a man, but in certain exceptional cases the honour may fall on a woman. In a certain *okka* in Nālknāḍ the men were all slaughtered in a fight over 160 years ago, and the only survivor was a pregnant woman who fled to the shrine of Pāyūrappa in Malabar. This lady gave birth to a son and returned later to her conjugal *okka* in Nālknāḍ. She is regarded as the Founder of this *okka*, and is propitiated annually at the end of the harvest festival.

² *Bira* is a corruption of the Sanskrit *vīra*, which means a 'hero'. In the Kannaḍa country memorial stones called *Iragallu* were formerly erected for heroes dying in battle.

Gulika is different from Kūli which merely means a spirit or 776 ghost. Kūlis are troublesome spirits which cause illness, possess people, and have to be propitiated with offerings of food and drink.

XVI

The ancestral house has a special importance to a Coorg: he 596 regards it as sacred, he is bound by very powerful ties to it, and he 778 considers it the proper place where the marriage of a member 796 should be celebrated and where his funeral should be performed. Even today the various branches of an *okka* gather together at the ancestral house during the harvest festival and during the Kāvēri festival. They also gather together for the festival of the local village-deity which may be held annually or biennially, and for the performance of ancestor-propitiation.

The house is swept and cleaned every day, and on special ritual [351] occasions such as a festival or ancestor-propitiation, its walls are colour-washed, and the floor washed with a solution of cow-dung, a common purifying agent all over India. A festival is also a holiday, and the men abstain from agricultural work and perform festival tasks such as hanging up festoons of mango leaves on the *lir'el* above the main door. Everyone has a bath and changes into clean clothes brought by the washerman. A festival also means a feast and the [262] feast may be either vegetarian or non-vegetarian. All over south India the feasts which are a part of calendar festivals may not include non-vegetarian dishes—this is an idea implicit in Sanskrit Hinduism. Non-Brahmins usually prepare non-vegetarian dishes on the day following the feast.

Coorgs follow other Hindus in preparing purely vegetarian 796 dishes on festival days. Even the ancestors are offered vegetarian dishes at these calendar festivals. But on those occasions which are exclusively devoted to the worship of ancestors meat and pork dishes and arrack are the preferred offerings to them. Some village-deities again require offerings of non-vegetarian dishes and liquor at festivals in their honour.

Another aspect of calendar festivals needs to be referred to here: 796 festivals such as the festival of arms and the harvest festival include 526 games like shooting at a target, running a race, throwing a 578 stone, &c. These games prove an occasion for the expression of the rivalry that exists between the *okkas* in a village or *nād*. Such an

796 occasion also canalizes the rivalry that exists in certain forms that
526 are not destructive of the social order. Coorgs themselves treat this
578 part of their calendar festivals as providing an arena for the expres-
sion of inter-*okka* rivalry.

● 596 Co-operation between *okkas* also receives emphasis at these
796 festivals. Every *okka* in the village (or *nāḍ*) is required to send all
621 the adult males in it to the collective dances which are held at the
harvest festival. Again, there is a collective hunt at the end of
the harvest festival (and usually at the end of the festivals of the
village-deities) to which every *okka* has to send *all* the adult males
in it. Failure to do so would result in a fine being levied on the
defaulting *okka*.

When the festival of a village-deity is being performed, every
okka (excluding *okkas* of very low castes) has to send a man to help
in festival work such as clearing the weeds growing in the temple
compound and on the road along which the deity will be taken
out in procession.

There is also a minute division of the ritual tasks among the
high caste *okkas* in the village. For instance, the representative of
one *okka* carries the image of the deity, while the representative of
another *okka* carries a lamp and the representative of yet another
okka carries the money-box (*cheppu*), and so on. Formerly these
tasks were looked upon as privileges, and an *okka* was jealous of
the privileges to which it was entitled by tradition and custom.

The village is a unity made up of the various *okkas* in it. The
individuality of each participating *okka* and the unity of all the
okkas in the village¹ are both brought out in Professor Emeneau's
description of a dance held at the festival of Bhadrakālī at Karavalē-
bāḍga near Mercarz. Professor Emeneau writes:

this dance is performed on several days both at the temple and on the
dancing-green. In this the essential performers are a male member of
each *śib* [*okka*] in the village, carrying each a *koḍi* or staff surmounted
by cloth tied in the form of two cones with their bases together and the
apex of one pointing upward. Each performer has the right arm bare
and a fold of the turban hanging down his back. If all the male members
of a *śib* should be unable to dance because of age or infirmity, the *koḍi*

¹ Castes like the Poleyas are excluded from this unity. It is recognized that
such castes perform extremely useful tasks both in day-to-day living and at
festivals, but their position in the social hierarchy excludes them from certain
positions and tasks. The principle of stratification modifies the idea of the unity
of a village.

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must be carried by a member of another *sib* along with that of his own *sib*. It is the *sibs* that are represented at the performance and individuals who dance in the line after the men carrying the staffs are a non-essential part of the performance, carry no staffs, do not wear their dress in the distinctive manner of the *sib*-representatives, and may at any time drop out of the dance which is forbidden for the staff-carriers.¹

The calendar festivals as well as the festivals of the village-deity emphasize both the solidarity and the individuality of the *okka* in a variety of ways. The games which are a part of some festivals give expression to and canalize inter-*okka* rivalry. All the *okkas* in a village have to co-operate in certain common tasks and games, but even this co-operation is on the basis of the acceptance of the *okka* as the nuclear unit of society. The participation of all the *okkas* in the common tasks stresses not only the unity of the larger groups such as caste, village, and *nād*, but also of the unity and individuality of the participating *okkas*. This is clearly brought out in the dance at Karavalébādga.

XVII

Every Coorg *okka* has a relationship of friendship with another Coorg *okka* living not far away. Such friendship is between two *okkas*, and not between the individual members of them. It is traditional and institutionalized. It is usually, though not always, mutual, and the headman and mistress of the friend-*okka* have duties, ritual as well as social, on occasions such as birth, marriage, and death. These duties are in addition to those derived from common membership of the village. (See Chapter II, Section XI.)

It has been stated earlier (see Chapter II, Section XI) that the social stressing of family friendship offset the disadvantage of the lack of any real neighbourhood in a village in Coorg Proper. But isolated as a Coorg *okka* was, it was not completely without neighbours. Only they were not the right kind of neighbours. The Poleyas or other low-caste servants of the Coorg *okka* lived in huts near by, but the few small Poleyas could not give effective help in beating off a raiding party from another village; and their caste prevented them from participation in the ritual of a Coorg house. They could only do menial jobs and carry messages.

The relationship between a Coorg *okka* and its servant families

¹ 'Kinship and Marriage among the Coorgs', J.R.A.S. (Bengal), iv, 1938, p. 124.

596 has been considered earlier. The economic part of the relationship
 357 was certainly very important, but it was only a part of a total rela-
 624 tionship which had several aspects. In Coorg folklore there are instances of a servant's great loyalty to his master, and of the latter's great affection for the former. Achchu Kotta, a Poleya servant of Kallumāḍa Ayyappa, threw himself on the funeral pyre of his master. Ayyappa was very ill when a caravan from Bēngūr set out for Malabar, and Achchu Kotta joined this caravan against his master's wishes. Before the caravan had crossed into Malabar, Achchu Kotta heard that his master had died. Torn with grief and remorse, Achchu Kotta ran back to Bēngūr only to see the flames of the funeral pyre consuming the body of his dead master. Without a second thought Achchu Kotta jumped into the fire. The members of the Kallumāḍa okka erected a stone in memory of Achchu Kotta outside their ancestor-shrine. When an ancestor-propitiation is held in the Kallumāḍa okka, offerings of food and drink are made to Achchu Kotta's stone.¹

[745] Formerly, a man and woman from the servant family or families observed ritual mourning for their dead master or mistress. The bond between master and servant was strong enough to find expression in ritual.

[567] The *de facto* abolition of slavery by the opening of coffee plantations in the middle of the last century, and the great changes of the last hundred years, have contributed to the weakening of the bond between the master-okka and the servant families. But even now, when a Poleya does a piece of work, the mistress of the house gives him a small quantity of castor oil in addition to the wages
 [461] (*kochchi*), paid in paddy. The application of castor oil to the head is supposed to have a 'cooling' effect on the entire body. Hard work, especially in the sun, brings about 'heat' in the body which needs to be 'cooled' by the application of castor oil to the head. The giving of castor oil by the mistress shows her concern for the health and well-being of the servant: it is an act of friendship.

¹ *Pattōlē Palumē*, p. 364.

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TABLE OF SAMMANDA RIGHTS

Serial No.	Occasion	Subject of the rights	Where the subject had rights originally	Where now given	Remarks
1.	The marriage of a virgin (<i>hammi mam-gala</i>).	Bride.	In her natal <i>okka</i> .	In the grooms' <i>okka</i> .	
2.	The marriage of a widow: (a) To her dead husband's brother.	..	..	..	No rights are given as the widow already has rights in her new husband's <i>okka</i> . The recent tendency to give her rights anew in her new husband's <i>okka</i> shows that the elementary family is becoming more important among Coorgs.
	(b) When the new husband belongs to a different <i>okka</i> from her dead husband's.	Widow-bride.	In her dead husband's <i>okka</i> .	In the new husband's <i>okka</i> .	The widow's connexion with her dead husband's <i>okka</i> is first of all severed and this restores her to her natal <i>okka</i> . At her remarriage she is given rights in the new husband's <i>okka</i> .
3.	Divorce	Divorcée.			Her connexion with her husband's <i>okka</i> is severed and she then reverts to her natal <i>okka</i> .
4.	<i>Kold adanga sammamanda maripa</i> : when, in exceptional circumstances, it is intended to give the children of the widow or divorcée membership of	Widow or divorcée's children.	In their father's <i>okka</i> .	In their mother's <i>okka</i> .	Children normally are members of their father's <i>okka</i> , and only under exceptional circumstances are they transferred to

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Serial No.	Occasion	Subject of the rights	Where the subject had rights originally	Where now given	Remarks
596 586	their mother's natal okka.				their mother's natal okka. Such transference re- quires the unani- mous consent of the adult males of both the con- cerned okkas.
848 3. 596	Legitimization of a pre- or extra-mar- ital liaison: (a) <i>bendu parijs</i> , when both the parties are alive.	The woman con- cerned and her children.	The woman is a member of her natal okka, whereas her child- ren do not have mem- bership anywhere.	In the okka of the geni- tor.	
	(b) <i>kutta parijs</i> , when one of the parties to the liai- son is dead.	do.	do.	do.	(b) The perfor- mance of <i>kutta parijs</i> enables the surviving partner to the liaison and the children to take part in the fun- eral rites for the dead person.
596 6. 428	(a) <i>Okka parijs</i> .	Son-in- law.	In his natal okka.	In his wife's natal okka.	(a) The consent of the son-in- law and of all the adult males in his okka is necessary to effect the trans- fer.
	(b) <i>makha parijs</i> .	do.	do.	do.	(b) The son-in- law retains his membership of his natal okka in <i>makha parijs</i> . The children of both okka <i>parijs</i> and <i>makha parijs</i> are members of their mother's natal okka.

204 THE CULTS OF THE LARGER SOCIAL UNITS

634 When the fortunes of a *nād* were at a low ebb, the elders of that
[288] *nād* went on a pilgrimage to the patron-deity of the *nād* and prayed
to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

[273] Legends grew up about a hero. Chegeṭṭira Appanna is supposed
to have accomplished everything he did before he was sixteen days
old. The hero had power to curse. After he died, he became a
powerful spirit, a *bira*.

The boundary of a *nād* obtains importance on some ritual occasions. A groom passing in state through a *nād* to the bride's village is given the 'plantain honour' at the boundary of the *nād*.

634 Richter describes a custom which brings out the ritual importance of the *nād*-boundary:
164

782 In cases of sore afflictions befalling a whole village or *nād* such as small-pox, cholera, cattle-disease, the ryots [peasants] combine to appease the wrath of Māriamma [the goddess Māri who presides over these epidemics] by collecting contributions of pigs, rice, coconuts, bread and plantains, from the different houses and depositing them at the *mandu* [green]; whence they are carried in a procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the *nād*-boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions consumed by those composing the procession. The people of adjoining villages and *nāds* repeat the ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from *nād* to *nād* and, at last, expelled from the country.¹

X

- [52] There is no social unit among Coorgs which is without a head.
621 Every *okha* has a headman and the headman's wife is the head of
[43] the women in the *okha*. A temple has a headman with a number of
929 officials under him. A village has a village-headman, and above the village is the *nād*, and every *nād* has at least one *nād*-headman, and frequently more than one. The highest category of headmen are,
[634] however, the headmen of *stné* or *désha*, of whom there are eight in all.
Coorgs have a keen sense of discipline, which is associated in

¹ *Manual of Coorg*, p. 170.

206 THE CULTS OF THE LARGER SOCIAL UNITS

796 During the harvest festival a party of villagers go from house to
533 house, and at each house they visit they sing the 'house song',
622 which gives an account of the ancestors of that house. After the
[577] song is sung, the singers are treated to refreshments and given
gifts of money.

The singers are required to visit the village-headman's house
first. Similarly, the people who put on fancy dress during the
harvest festival have to visit the village-headman's house first.

For a week before the beginning of the harvest festival all the
adult males in the village gather together at the village-headman's
house every evening before proceeding to the green to practise the
dances and play some games. The guests are treated to a light
[577] repast, after which the headman asks someone to take up a *duḍi*
(small drum) and sing. The person who is asked to sing may not
[681] refuse, and refusal is punishable by fine. Even the temple-headman
is not exempt from this rule.

At the Kundat Bhadrakālī festival, the villagers frequently move
about in processions during the last few days of the festival. At the
head of these processions walks the *nāḍ*-headman's wife carrying
[778] a dish-lamp. A dish-lamp has ritual value, and it is essential on
every ritual occasion, and it is the privilege of the *nāḍ*-headman's
wife to carry it at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakālī.

178 The political and economic forces set in motion in the last 120
622 years have been responsible for certain structural inconsistencies
● 596 coming to the surface during festivals. It was not always the
headman's *okka* which benefited from the new economic and
educational opportunities. The *okkas* which benefited from the
latter could ignore with impunity the headman's position and
authority. Frequently the headman accepted the changed situation,
and this not only failed to solve the conflict for supremacy between
him and the newly rich *okkas* but instead accentuated it. The
latter, having secured wealth and official positions, tried to secure
headmanship too. Disputes became frequent.

[656] The breakdown of the traditional economy meant that fre-
quently the headman could not fulfil the duties of hospitality
periodically required of him; and when the headman was unable
to perform his duties, he found it difficult to insist on others
178 performing their duties towards him. People began to gravitate to
622 the new centres of power, the officials and rich men.

627 Formerly, people used to take their disputes to their headman

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

229

The entire rice-field (*varga*) is cut up into a number of small rectangular plots ridged up on all the four sides. Each plot (*tēva*) is referred to by a distinct name, and one of these plots is regarded as the main plot and it has the same name as the entire rice-field. The traditional association between an *okka* and its ancestral estate is symbolized in the custom of burying the umbilical cord of the eldest son of the head of the *okka* in the main plot of the ancestral estate. The eldest son is the one who is going to become the head of the *okka* in course of time, and as head of the *okka* he will have to look after the ancestral rice-field. The main plot stands for the entire rice-field, and it is entirely proper that the umbilical cord of the future head of the *okka* should be buried in the main plot. It may be recalled, in this connexion, that during the periodical ancestor-propitiation, the Banna oracle, possessed by an ancestor, may demand to be shown round the rice-field in order to see for himself whether it is looked after properly. Thus a Coorg continues to take an interest in the affairs of his *okka* even after his death, which means that he continues to care for the rice-field on which the prosperity and happiness of the *okka* and thus, indirectly, of the total society depends.

Every stage of the cultivation of the rice crop is marked by ritual. The main plot of the ancestral rice-field is ritually ploughed on the first of Aries, the beginning of the new year according to the solar calendar. Either the head of the *okka*, or a younger member who is considered to be specially suitable by the astrologer, ritually ploughs the main plot during an auspicious period of time. Regular ploughing of the rice-fields commences only after the ritual ploughing on New Year's Day.

Paddy is sown in the nurseries at an auspicious period of time. When the plants are 10-12 inches high, they are transferred to the various plots in the rice-fields. The plucking of the young plants and their transplantation are both begun during auspicious periods. The transplantation of the young plants is a highly complicated task requiring the co-ordination of the work of a number of people. It is especially so if the estate is a big one.

The Kāvēri festival includes a rite called *bottu* (lit., fear) and this is intended to protect the growing crop, the woods on the estate, and the domestic well.

One of the most important calendar festivals of Coorgs is the *putri* (lit., new rice) when the paddy sheaves are ritually cut.

584

The marriage is at present arranged by the families of the young people. The family of the young man approaches the family of a girl who is considered a suitable match and after much discussion arrangements are made; the girl is informed of them and in most cases she acquiesces. The authority of the family is ideally supreme. Young people have many opportunities of meeting, or at least of seeing one another, and as we should expect, matches that are not likely to be enduring are tacitly avoided by the elders of the family. Cases are known however where a girl has refused the arranged marriage and for various reasons elder members of her family have agreed with her and prevented the marriage; cases are also known where a young man after suggesting for himself a particular girl and carrying with him most of the other members of his family has found opposition from an elderly female member who disapproves of the girl and he has had to give up his idea. Life in a joint family, as is well known in other parts of India, is a matter of the adjustment of conflicting stresses. The evidence of the marriage song seems to show that at some time in the past a young man went out himself to look for a suitable girl and settled the matter himself, without reference to his family until the time for the formal arrangement arrived. There is probably some historical truth in the account, but the period at which this was the custom is not known. Richter's account of 1870 implies, though it does not mention explicitly, a state of things like that at the present day.

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When a marriage is to be formally arranged and fixed, the aruvé¹ of the young man's family accompanied by representatives of this family, e.g. the man's father, his elder brother, or a brother-in-law, go to the house of the girl's family. There they meet the aruvé and the representatives of the girl's family. Formally the man's party declare that he will marry the girl and the girl's party that they will give the girl, and the aruvés guarantee that their respective parties will hold to the agreement. The ceremony is performed in the nellaki of the house, i.e. the portion of the central hall opposite the door, where a lamp hangs. It is regarded as the sacred part of the house and apparently the sanctity centers in the lamp, before which prayers are offered in the evening to the ancestors of the sib (or nowadays to any other gods in addition). Most of the ceremonies to be described

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¹ Two sibs stand in mutual relationship to one another, so that each provides an aruvé for the other on certain ceremonial occasions. Their duties in connexion with marriages are described in the text. At a funeral the aruvé is present and seems to have been originally entrusted with supervision of the ceremonial. At present the office tends to become a mere formality and the aruvé does not necessarily come from the traditional sib. The man of the traditional sib is called manparuvé 'land-aruvé'; one who is engaged for the occasion only is ponnaruvé 'gold-aruvé' and this term seems to carry with it some derogatory connotation.

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hold duties for 60 days to recover her normal health, and devote herself to her baby. During this period she daily bathes in hot water after having been well rubbed with castor oil before a charcoal fire. The robust health of a Coor woman is no doubt due to the care taken by them during pregnancy and confinement.

Naming Ceremony

As soon as a Coor boy is born, a little bow of a castor oil plant stick with an arrow made of a leaf stalk of the same plant is put into his little hands and a gun is fired in the courtyard. He is thus at taking his first breath introduced into the world as a future hunter and warrior. This ceremony is not generally now observed. On the twelfth day after birth, the child is laid into a cradle by the mother or grandmother who gives the name, which in many instances is well sounding and significant. Boys are known by Belliappah, Ponnappa, Mandanna and girls Puvakka, Muthakka and Chinnamma. The Coor women are very prolific and bear children to the extent of ten or twelve. In cases of necessity a wet-nurse is engaged, but infanticide is not practised.

Family

The Coor family is of the patriarchal type. It is the domicile of all male relatives and their children belonging to one parental stock. Two or three generations, grandfather, grandmother, their sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and other children numbering from 20 to 60 or even more in some cases, all live and mess together. The labourers who were once their slaves belong to the family and depend on their mistress for food and orders. So long as there is peace and harmony, a Coor family is a fine example of the patriarchal type. Every domestic affair of importance can be undertaken only with the consent of the senior member. He is expected to look after the principal needs of the family and its members individually and check irregularities of all kinds by sound discipline. The nature and extent of his control may be gathered from the fact that married sons and their wives choose their residence under the paternal roof to avoid the responsibility of a separate establishment. The senior female member is the queen of the household and holds a corresponding position among the junior members and their wives and daughters. The peace and harmony of the family that once prevailed may be marred by discord, by the harsh treatment of an imperious mother-in-law, by the jealousy and heart-burnings of the married members of the material questions affecting the family income and individual claims. The senior member who is the Karnavan of the family has no easy position under such circumstances. The domestic life under normal circumstances is brightened by the affection of the children for their parents and relatives, and the little ones, of whom there is generally a good number, are in turn great pets of the family. The bearing of the young in the presence of the old is decorous, but the grown-up members are not

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- 596 generally well guarded in the use of proper expressions in their talk with the young. The educated men of the present day exercise a potent influence for good in the normal conversation, and show due respect to their brother's wife with whom no familiarity is allowed. There is a tendency at present among the discontented members to break up the ancestral family by a division of the family property among the members.
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Property and Disposal

- 423 The property of the Coorgs consists chiefly of the ancestral house and the land belonging to it which under the Rajas was held on a feudal tenure and on a light assessment termed *jamma dhumi* or birthright land, because it was inalienably vested in the family or house, and the British Government confirmed the settlement. Additional land was taken up by them on the *sagu* tenure, but, in course of time, Government allowed to some extent such *sagu* land to be converted into *jamma* land. Other land held as *jagir* was granted for certain Government service as *umbl* land on a light assessment. During the last thirty years, many houses have opened out coffee plantations on their own or Government land, or rented cardamom jungles. Thus the actual wealth of the Coorgs consists of landed property and their prosperity depends on the exertions and means of cultivation; but imprudent enterprises and unexpected reverses have caused much embarrassment. Formerly, all the members of a Coorg house lived together in the ancestral home or in some outfarm, *koppu*, neither of which could be alienated nor subdivided among the members of the family. All of them worked for the common good under the management of the *yajamana* or *korakara*, and had their subsistence on the proceeds. Any surplus on the annual reckoning became the property of the house for providing incidental expenditure on the occasion of marriages, funerals, and other ceremonies, as also for the purchase of new land in the interest of the family. If, however, an individual member by becoming a salaried officer or by coming into possession of money through marriage, was enabled to enter upon private speculation without any aid from the ancestral house, any property or acquirements thus made became his private property and were left at his own disposal by gift or will. Many young men have thus become separated from the ancestral house and established a new homestead, and as long as they contributed to the expenses of the former, they maintained their share in the proceeds. This is the proper mode of setting up a new house. Disintegration is now setting in, and some try to break up the ancestral houses by a division of the landed property among the members.
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Adoption

- 597 The right of adoption is given to every Coorg house in the absence of male issue, or by an unmarried man or woman or widower in order to secure the inheritance of personal property or rights.